

The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School

**THE BRAZILIAN SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR EDUCATION PLAN - FACTORS
AFFECTING LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMMUNITIES OF THE
ESTREITO HYDROELECTRIC REGION**

A Dissertation in

Agriculture Extension and Education and International Agriculture and Development

by

Erika Pioltine Anseloni

© 2020 Erika Pioltine Anseloni

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2020

The dissertation of Erika Pioltine Anseloni was reviewed and approved by the following:

Mark A. Brennan

Professor and UNESCO Chair in Community, Leadership, and Youth Development

Co-Chair of Committee

Dissertation Co-Adviser

Head of the Graduate Program in Agricultural Extension and Education

Theodore R. Alter

Professor of Agricultural, Environmental, and Regional Economics

Co-Chair of Committee

Dissertation Co-Adviser

Tracy S. Hoover

Professor of Agricultural and Extension Education

Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education, College of Agricultural Sciences

Nicole Webster

Associate Professor of Youth and International Development

Craig A. Campbell

Assistant Teaching Professor of Education

ABSTRACT

With the change of political circumstances in the '90s, the Brazilian government began to create participatory democratic practices, challenging a cultural and political history of dissociation of citizens from public life. In 2018, the Brazilian Ministry of Education (BMEC) launched the Social Mobilization for Education Plan (SMEP), calling on all Brazilians to engage and mobilize others to work collaboratively for improving education. BMEC developed local leadership (*social mobilizers*) for executing actions to promote collective engagement and to strengthen the family-school-community relationship. The success of SMEP implementation varied across communities and, despite its popularity, the activism of social mobilizers often was not sustained. To better understand this phenomenon, this study investigated factors facilitating or hindering the engagement of social mobilizers through a comparative case study of six towns in the Estreito Hydroelectric Region in northeast Brazil. Four sets of factors grounded in theory that likely impacted social mobilizers engagement and SMEP implementation: socio-demographics, community capacity, power relations, and strategies and structures for the local implementation. Data was gathered through document analysis, participant observation, and interviews with key-participants and examined qualitatively through thematic analysis. The findings revealed that although several aspects motivated social mobilizer engagement (interaction, networks, local needs, passion, collective engagement, leadership, results), other factors represented conditions that either enabled or prevented participation. These factors were related to local implementation strategies (institutional support, funding, local SMEP Committee, external leader) and to power and politics. The SMEP implementation also fostered the development of the communities and individual and collective agency, but those were undermined by termination of the program and lack of support by external agents. Recommendations for policy makers are provided.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
ABBREVIATIONS	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xi
CHAPTER I – Introduction	1
1. Democracy, social participation, and community leadership	1
2. The Brazilian democratic context and SMEP	3
3. Framing the purposes and focus of this study	7
4. Research setting and design	9
5. Researcher Stance	11
6. Structure of Dissertation	17
CHAPTER II - SMEP and Insights from the Literature	18
1. Characterizing SMEP	19
1.1. SMEP’s overview	19
1.2. SMEP’s strategy of implementation	20
1.3. SMEP local leadership development and social mobilizers	22
2. SMEP - ambivalence and critiques	26
3. Background – participatory democracy in Brazil	29
4. Situating SMEP among Brazilian participatory innovations	31
5. Defining a framework for getting insights from previous research	33
6. Aspects influencing citizen engagement	35
6.1. Contributions from experiences and studies of social participation in Brazil	35
6.2. Contributions from volunteerism.....	39
6.3. Contributions from other studies	40
CHAPTER III - Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	55
1. Toro & Werneck’s theoretical and methodological proposition that inspired SMEP.....	57
2. Analyzing SMEP through other theoretical standpoints	63
3. The Interactional Theory of Community	67
4. Factors affecting engagement in the SMEP context	74
4.1. Interactional Theory of Community	74
4.2. Participatory Democracy and Empowerment	76
4.3. Power dimensions and community power structure	82

4.4. Strategies for the local implementation of SMEP.....	86
5. Conceptual framework and variables.....	88
5.1. The variables within each conceptual group.....	89
CHAPTER IV – Methodology	94
1. The qualitative approach of the study.....	94
2. Research Design.....	96
2.1. Methodology – Embedded Multiple Case Study.....	96
2.2. Site selection and strategies for the selection of the multiple cases – The six communities of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region.....	101
2.3. Population and Sampling procedures – Purposive and snowball sampling.....	106
2.4. The variables of the study.....	109
3. Methods – Data collection and analysis.....	110
3.1. Data collection instrumentation.....	110
3.2. Sources of evidence and data collection procedures.....	112
3.3. Data Analysis Strategies.....	116
3.4. Managing the data during the analysis.....	122
3.5. Data interpretation strategy.....	123
4. Confidentiality, privacy, and ethics.....	124
5. Validity.....	125
6. Reliability.....	128
7. Previous experience of the investigator with the cases.....	130
8. Limitations.....	134
CHAPTER V – The implementation of SMEP in the	137
Estreito Hydroelectric Region (EHR)	137
1. Introduction.....	138
2. The implementation of SMEP and the role of Gaia Social.....	139
2.1. The year 2012.....	142
2.2. The year of 2013.....	143
2.3. The years of 2014 and following.....	147
3. Social mobilizers and variations in the local SMEP Committee.....	149
4. The role of the MDE and the MSE.....	152
5. Similarities and differences.....	155
CHAPTER VI - Description of the cases and findings of the within-case analysis regarding SMEP leadership activism	157

1. The presentation of the findings.....	157
2. Findings of each case	159
2.2. Darcinópolis	159
2.2. Babaçulândia.....	166
2.3. Tupiratins	174
2.4. Barra do Ouro	181
2.5. Goiatins.....	187
2.6. Carolina	193
3. Comparative and summative table	200
4. Conclusion and next steps.....	206
CHAPTER VII – Findings of the cross-cases analysis	207
1. Sociodemographics	208
2. Power relations, politics, and empowerment	214
2.1. Politics, conflicts, and power relations	215
2.2. Empowerment	220
3. Community Capacity	224
4. Structure and strategy of local implementation of SMEP.....	231
4.1. Leadership development for SMEP – training, events, materials, and guidance.....	232
4.2. Local official support – institutional and financial support and municipal laws	234
4.3. Leadership organization – SMEP Committee, strategic planning, and communication	237
4.4. Strategies of the local action - ownership, repertoire of activities, and perceived results	239
4.5. National and regional strategies – networks, support, and visibility	244
5. Commitment and positive feelings about education and community and Love for SMEP	250
CHAPTER VIII – Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations	252
1. Results and Conclusions	253
1.1. A metanalysis – the most significant aspects affecting the SMEP’s leadership activism	253
2. Recommendations.....	274
2.1. Introduction.....	274
2.2. Practical recommendations for policy and practices.....	276
2.3. Recommendations for future research	286
3. Considerations about the effectiveness or success of SMEP	288
4. Researcher stance revisited	294
5. Concluding thoughts	299
REFERENCES.....	301

APPENDIX A - Recruitment Materials	311
APPENDIX B – Informed Consent	314
APPENDIX C – Interview Protocols	318
APPENDIX D – Findings of the Within-Case Analysis and Socio-demographics of subjects	329

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.</i> Strategy of local implementation of SMEP	22
<i>Figure 2.</i> The conceptual framework of this study, representing potential factors influencing the active engagement of social mobilizers in leading the activities proposed by SMEP.....	89
<i>Figure 3.</i> The embedded multiple-case study design of this research.....	97
<i>Figure 4.</i> Map of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region (EHR), Brazil.....	102
<i>Figure 5.</i> The strategy of analysis used in the study.....	117
<i>Figure 6.</i> The detailed analytic strategy applied, based on thematic analysis and the technique of pattern matching.....	120
<i>Figure 7.</i> Timeline of the implementation and the development of SMEP activities in the EHR.	142
<i>Figure 8.</i> Relative significance and relationships among variables - sociodemographics.	214
<i>Figure 9.</i> Relative significance and relationships among variables - power.	224
<i>Figure 10.</i> Relative significance and relationships among variables – community capacity.	230
<i>Figure 11.</i> Relative significance and relationships among variables – local strategy and structure of SMEP implementation.....	250

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Independent variables and the triangulation of research methods.....	100
Table 2. Selected EHR communities and the criteria used in the maximum-variation cases.	106
Table 3. Evolution of purposive and final sampling	109
Table 4. Comparison of the description of the cases and summary of factors influencing leadership activism that emerged from the analysis.....	200
Table 5. Summary of the findings relating sociodemographic characteristics with the leadership activism in SMEP.....	213
Table 6. Summary of the findings relating power relations, politics, and empowerment with the leadership activism in SMEP.	223
Table 7. Summary of the findings relating community capacity with SMEP and leadership activism ...	231
Table 8. Summary of the findings relating the structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP with its leadership activism.....	249
Table 9. Aspects that supported the local leadership activism for SMEP and its implementation.	254
Table 10. Aspects that hindered local leadership activism for SMEP and the program’s lifetime.	254
Table 11. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively	330
Table 12. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively	331
Table 13. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Darcinópolis	331
Table 14. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively	332
Table 15. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively	333
Table 16. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Babaçulândia	334
Table 17. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively	335
Table 18. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively	337
Table 19. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Tupiratins	337
Table 20. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively	338
Table 21. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively	340
Table 22. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Barra do Ouro.....	341
Table 23. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively	342
Table 24. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively	346
Table 25. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Goiatins	347
Table 26. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively	348
Table 27. Within-case analysis’ findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively	350
Table 28. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Carolina	350

ABBREVIATIONS

ADE – Arrangement for the Development of Education

BMEC – Brazilian Ministry of Education

IDEB – Index of the Development of Basic Education

MA – Maranhão State

MD – Municipal Department

MDE – Municipal Department of Education

MDH – Municipal Department of Health

MDSW – Municipal Department of Social Work

MS – Municipal Secretary

MSE – Municipal Secretary of Education

PDE – Plan for the Development of Education

PNAIC – National Policy of Literacy at the Right Age

PNE – National Plan of Education

PPP – Political-Pedagogical Project

PME – Municipal Plan of Education

PNE – National Plan of Education

SMEP – Social Mobilization for Education Plan

SME – Social Mobilization for Education

TO – Tocantins State

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wow! What a journey! This dissertation marks the end of a cycle that revealed itself as something much bigger and important than I have ever imagined. I am totally transformed by this experience. The process has taught me so much, and not only about theories and research, but about myself, strength, support, life, love, faith, and being. Surrendering while never quitting. The flow is Divine. And I feel so grateful and privileged for the opportunity and for all the amazing people I encountered on the way... Here are some words in an attempt to hug each one of them again to say: thank you! I am here now because you were there for me.

My list is vast, and I start by the source. I have profound gratitude for myself for navigating this fantastic adventure and breaking the chains. For the courage, for the commitment, for never quitting, for embracing darkness and light, for giving my best, for caring for others, for uttering miracles, for believing in my magic and for learning to love and admire myself. To God, Jesus, my guardian angel, Pai Vinicius, Dr. Florisvaldo, and of the Doutores Sábios da Terra, and Irmão Jesuíno, all this amazing Spirituality who has supported me along the way. I feel you; I know what you did, and I am deeply grateful.

I am forever grateful for my amazing family, the love of my life. Thank you, Denny, meu Uxo, my love, my partner in life. And I write this bathed in gratitude tears because, deep inside, only you and I know what this journey meant to me and to us. We have been through a lot; we had to reinvent ourselves, be the strength for ourselves and each other, give our blood and heart, and learn to trust life and God more than ever. Thank you, Uxo, for everything you have done for me, us, and this work. I feel you are part of this research as well, and we learned so much from it all. I am sorry for all the challenges, but I am so very proud of us that we went through them and

that we have been becoming better and better versions of ourselves. I know we are better when we are together. I love you. I am sorry. Forgive me. Thank you.

Oh, my beloved parents. My biggest cheerleaders, my support, my safe harbor. Thank you. For everything. For all that you provided in life, for all the encouragement, love, caring, pride... For setting the example. And thank you for the support of finding materials ways that allowed us to be here, all our business for the heart. Your heart and worried minds took this doctoral journey with me, and we had to be physically apart. I am sorry for that, and I am so grateful. Thank you for caring so much about this and me, we made it! We are the Guerreiros, the Warriors, we are! We won this battle, and we will keep winning much more. I couldn't have better parents. I love you deeply. I am so lucky and grateful to you.

Thank you, Deia, my beloved sister, who always wrapped my heart in love, never left me alone, and provided the best advice about living. I love you, infinitely. Thank you for doing the hard work in Brazil, taking care of daddy and mom, and making me so involved. You are my angel. Thank you, Naty, my beloved niece and goddaughter, for all the encouragement with this work and emotional support. I love you and will always be here for you. Thank you, Elaine, my sister, for all your immense love, prayers, and unstoppable support in helping us to survive here. I love you. Thank you, my beloved brothers, Marcus, Helo, Deia, Lu, and Anne, for covering our back, for the different ways you supported us to keep riding this journey. I love you deeply. To my nieces and nephews, my godmother Nana, my in-laws Rati and Adauto, for all the love, the prayers, and support for our stay here. And to our beloved Neneca, for being the best cat daughter, amazing supporter, co-worker, and healer. I couldn't make it without you.

I really need to say thank you for the amazing people and professionals that are part of my Ph.D. Committee. I have no words to describe my gratitude for all your support, comprehension, and guidance throughout these almost six years. I had no idea about the depth of

the experience I was about to dive in when I started. And you were my light, my oxygen, the hands, and smiles that I needed to keep swimming.

Mark and Ted, you are truly the best. I owe you everything. Amazing human beings, professionals, and mentors. Thank you for believing in me and in making things appear much easier and lighter, always. Thanks for the teamwork, for the patience, for respecting my sensitive self. Thanks for the so constructive feedback, for always being available, for caring so much about me. Thanks for all the miracles you operated and for finding ways to help Denny and me to survive here. Thank you for the barriers you helped me to break to be able to keep trying. I gained so much from our relationship that I could never measure. And I learned so much from and with you. You were amazing advisers, encouragers, and friends. Thank you for ALL you have done for me. And I know it was a lot. I love you and will carry you always in my heart.

To Nicole, Tracy, Craig, and Madhu. I couldn't have invited better people to be part of my Committee. You all came into my life in such magical ways... Thanks for all your patience and support along that journey. For not quitting on me. You are brilliant professionals carrying beautiful hearts. Each one of you taught me important things that I will keep carrying for my life. They are like small little gifts of light. Tracy, you gave me the gift of friendship, beyond titles or cultural differences. You always cared for Denny and me, and it was always a real pleasure to be with you. Nicole you gave me the gift of reconnecting to my worthiness. You helped me to remember the challenges but also the power of being a woman and Latina in a foreign country. Thank you for your good balance of strength, good mood, and social sensitivity. Craig, you gave me confidence and kindness. I learned so much from your openness and wisdom. And in your class, I gained the skills and insights that I needed to be a confident qualitative researcher and to admit to the world that I love and could be good at it. Madhu, you gave me faith and lightness in academia. With your wonderful heart and eyes that see beauty everywhere, you encouraged me

to look beyond the deadlines and not allow them to kill me.

I am profoundly grateful to all the participants of this study, who shared their stories and hearts with me. I am so proud of you and your bravery in their communities. I am honored to tell your stories, and for all the love and warmth you received me. Thank you for the SMEP Team at BMEC for all your support and contribution since the beginning. I know you struggle. I also owe a big thanks to the amazing support of my friends at Gaia Social, in all the ways you did it, especially Maira Pereira. I admire you all so much and am blessed to be part of your story of positive change.

Some friends were also truly angels in my journey. My forever gratitude for Susan Kennedy, my beloved friend, who encouraged me to never quit and provided amazing support for editing my chapters. You are sunshine in my life. Thank you to my beloved soul sister, Deva Burle, for being brave and editing two chapters in a moment of vulnerability to both of us. Thank you, my beloved Janis Nickerson, for being an amazing guardian angel, for your loyal friendship, for being our ground in State College, for all you have always done for me. To my beloved soul sister, Colleen Unroe, for all your love, support, understanding, laughs, and friendship, I love you to the moon and back. To my friends from my graduate program, that was so important in this journey, Roshan, Jean, Noel, Maurice, Kaila, Erica, thank you! Thanks for the love and support of my great friends of the Brazilian community in State College, in special my beloved Flavinha and Yamá. Thank you to Vivian Aguiar and Leslie Laing for the great final encouragement for concluding this journey. My profound gratitude for Elisha Halpin, for all your teachings and way-showing, and all my sisters from the Radiant Temple for all the amazing support. I love you all so much, and I could not make it without you. I am so grateful for having met you, it has changed me for good. Also, I owe a special thanks to my Brazilian friends, and especially to my soul brothers and sisters, for the friendship, growth, and support, I love you

forever, Mao, Vi, Du, Lu, and Mulinha. A special thanks to my beloved soul sister Josi Secco, who became amazing support for my heart.

Finally, I would like to leave a special thanks to people that provided support that made this research possible. Thank you very much to Deanna Behring and Mark Brennan, for funding part of my field trip, through the Office of International Programs of the College of Agriculture and the UNESCO Chair for Community, Leadership, and Youth Development at Penn State. Also, to Masume Assaf and the Directorate of International Student & Scholar Advising for the support with health insurance and tuition in my final year, thank you. Finally, to Dr. Connie Baggett, for the great opportunity of my teaching assistantship at Penn State, his support and kindness. I learned and grew so much from that experience.

Pra você, pai, Valdeci Paulo Anseloni. A minha parte cumprida do nosso acordo. Aprendi a vencer a luta a cada dia, como você. Porque NÓS somos guerreiros. Milagres acontecem, se a gente permitir.

Obrigada por TUDO. Te amo infinito.

CHAPTER I – Introduction

A teoria sem a prática vira "verbalismo", assim como a prática sem teoria vira ativismo. No entanto, quando se une a prática com a teoria tem-se a práxis, a ação criadora e modificadora da realidade.

[Theory without practice becomes "verbalism", just as practice without theory becomes activism. However, when practice and theory are combined, there is praxis, the creative and modifying action of reality.]

Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and philosopher, leading advocate of critical pedagogy

1. Democracy, social participation, and community leadership

Democracy can offer a set of opportunities for development (Dewey, 1939; Miller, 2003; Sen, 2001). That is especially true when one understands development as the enhancement of individuals' and communities' capabilities to give people choice and opportunity in exercising their reasoned agency (Dewey, 1939; Sen, 2001). A democratic system should intrinsically enhance political and social participation - two acknowledged basic capabilities, as well as instrumentally contribute to people expressing their voice and bringing their claims to political attention (Dewey, 1939; Sen, 2001). However, the effectiveness of such a system depends on how it is exercised and how its potentials are realized (Diamond et al, 2016; Miller, 2003; Sen, 2001). For instance, governance can be, either formally or informally, more or less open to social participation (Gaventa, 2006; Taylor, 2011). Also, social participation may vary in quality, scale, characteristics, and level (Arnstein, 1969; Fiorina, 1999; Gaventa, 2006; Taylor, 2011).

Participatory democracy should empower citizens in self-determination and governance and contribute to an approach to development where citizens become active agents of change, rather than passive recipients of benefits (Boyte, 2004; Clark et al., 2001; Fischer 2000; Freire, 1970; Prokopy & Castelloe, 1999). To deepen democratic practices, some authors suggest a need

to reconnect citizens to public life, where citizens engage in a hands-on approach as co-creators of democracy and social change (Boyte, 2004; Dewey, 1939; Fischer, 2000; Freire, 1970; Kettering Foundation, 2015; Mathews, 2009; Toro & Werneck, 1996). In this view, citizens should not be mere customers of the government, but rather become active agents in solving common problems, in promoting the public welfare and goods (material or cultural) of general benefit, and in improving the social well-being. Boyte (2004) suggests that citizens should accomplish this through their professions, routines and community organizing, in an “everyday politics.” Citizens should engage in the public work of collaboration and promotion of sustained efforts in their communities, through negotiating differences and interests. By working together in the exercise of participation, individuals and their collectivity develop new relationships, experiences, ideas, awareness, and political and leadership skills (Freire, 1970; Taylor, 2011; Prokopy & Castelloe, 1999). In this way, democracy is co-created at the local level by citizens, resulting in enhanced political capabilities and empowered individuals and communities, shaping the broader society.

In this perspective, the local - or community - level becomes an important setting for democratic practices and the essential basis for social change (Brennan, 2003; Kettering Foundation, 2015; Mathews, 2013). Citizen engagement and collective action at the local level support citizens in preserving community identities, increasing local control over decision making, and handling their own development needs and aspirations (Brennan, 2003). It is a crucial part of individual and collective well-being, by also providing a basis for social and economic development, which benefits the entire community (Brennan, 2003; Bridger & Alter, 2009). Collective action also allows citizens to contribute purposively in the creation, articulation, and management of efforts to support or transform social structures (Brennan,

2003). Without a local basis for structural change, broader scale beneficial efforts cannot be expected (Wilkinson, 1991; Brennan, 2003).

However, although participation is a “political virtue in and of itself” (Fischer, 2000, p.71), as a practice, it is challenging or even frustrating sometimes. Thus, collective citizen participation has to be organized, facilitated, and even nurtured, because it is not easy to naturally happen. Local leadership, then, is an important asset for nurturing citizen engagement, driving community action, and strengthening community capacity for problem-solving (Apaliyah et al., 2012; Hustedde and Woodward, 1996; Pigg, 1999; Pigg et al., 2015; Wituk et al., 2009).

This research focuses on the engagement of local citizens as leaders in implementing collaborative efforts and in mobilizing community members for addressing common issues and engaging in democratic practices for the enhancement of the local well-being. Leadership capacity can be existent, or it can be built organically in the community, through participation and engagement, social interactions, community organizing, and collective action to address common grievances. It also can be nurtured through leadership development programs and strategies, elaborated by diverse institutions, such as NGOs, government, and Extension agencies. One example of the latter is the Social Mobilization for Education Plan (SMEP), which is the focus of this study. The Brazilian government created SMEP in 2008 based on a strategy of enhancing local leadership for the mobilization of local communities and other actors towards the betterment of public education.

2. The Brazilian democratic context and SMEP

Brazil is a developing country with recognized historical efforts in seeking to expand national, regional, and local democratic structures, although their functioning still struggles in being effective (Coelho, 2007; Gaventa, 2004). After 20 years of military dictatorship, in 1986,

Brazil became a democracy. Under the demand of interest groups throughout the country, including citizens, intellectuals, and organized students and workers, the new 1988 Brazilian Constitution (Brazil, 2015) sanctioned the decentralization of policy-making and established mechanisms for citizen participation in the construction, management, and monitoring of some social policies (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Coelho & Nobre, 2004).

Since then, on the one hand, those in the Brazilian government have created several spaces and opportunities for social participation at different levels, including public hearings, management councils, conferences, participatory budgeting, and deliberative mechanisms within regulatory agencies throughout the years (Coelho, 2007; Coelho & Nobre, 2004). On the other hand, such spaces are often associated with issues, such as token representation, corruption, asymmetric power (control by power elites), and low participation of lay citizens (Gohn, 2011). In several communities, for instance, there are many vacancies in organizations that rely on social participation (such as municipal education or health councils), and deficient understanding concerning the function and public importance of such institutions.

Also, authors suggest that there is a historical, cultural barrier in Brazil, and in Latin America, more generally, regarding the concept of “public” (Toro and Werneck, 1996). According to Toro and Werneck (1996) and my personal experience as a Brazilian citizen, the common perception is of “public” as something that is a property of the government, instead of something that belongs to and it is of the interest of all citizens. From that perspective, the provision of the social welfare is a matter of the government, with no citizen participation needed. This paternalistic culture reinforces nonparticipation and self-indulgence in the population. That also probably relates to low organizational development and engagement at the community level, especially in those communities that have historically been controlled by local

elites, such as in the case of rural communities in the Northern and Northeastern Brazil, the poorest regions in the country. Finally, to some analysts, the democratic promise in Brazil has been jeopardized by a persistent authoritarian political culture in the government, a weak associational life, and resistance from both state actors and society (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Carneiro; 2002; Andrade, 1998).

In contrast, the country has been experiencing an increase in bottom-up mobilization of citizens, especially through protests and organized actions against the national government's corruption, anti-democratic practices, political reforms, and loss of several social protections that the citizens have conquered throughout the last 20 years (Proner et al., 2016). This movement has gained greater prominence in the past seven years and seems especially strong in urban areas and bigger cities. Also, political party feuds have led citizens to a greater political positioning and expression, which has also gained force through social media and petitions that are widely spread and signed virtually. However, these social mobilizations are often repressed or manipulated by the government, political campaigns, the elite media, and even the police. Political reforms that are not favorable to the mass population and anti-democratic practices are raising since the impeachment of the former president, Dilma Rousseff (from the left-wing Workers' Party) in 2016. Several defend that the impeachment occurred through an institutional *coup d'etat* (Proner et al., 2016), framed and forced politically and economically by powerful actors, in a conspiracy of several right-wing parties, which remained in the power after the national elections in 2018.

Although this shifting political context, the Brazilian Constitution affirms education as a right for all Brazilians, which should be promoted with societal collaboration (Brazil, 2015). It also shapes education as a duty of both the government and of the family. Grounded on that

constitutional discourse, the left-wing Brazilian Ministry of Education (BMEC) launched SMEP in 2008, as a call to “the society for the volunteer work to mobilize families and communities towards the improvement of the quality of education” (Brazil, 2008, p.1).

According to the Minister of Education in charge at that time, one of the greatest tasks of democracy is to turn education into a public good, with the same quality in every school in the country. To him, that achievement could only be possible when the society incorporates education as a social value and mobilizes itself to strive for aspiration (Brazil, 2008). However, rather than a bottom-up movement from the society, grounded in greater local participation in the educational system, SMEP was a top-down strategy of the government to create spaces for participation to get social support for achieving its educational goals (Antonini, 2012).

In August 2016, the new right-wing government of Michel Temer terminated the SMEP with no public justification. Nevertheless, even after its official closure as a BMEC program, several communities still have implemented SMEP activities countrywide.

In practice, SMEP was part of the Plan for the Development of Education (PDE), launched by BMEC one year before SMEP’s inception (Brazil, 2007). The PDE was a governmental plan that provided 28 goals and guidelines to be achieved by 2022 and a set of programs designed to improve education in Brazil from kindergarten to graduate school (Brazil, 2007). The conceptual and methodological frameworks of SMEP were inspired by the social mobilization proposed by Toro and Werneck (1996), based on experiences in Colombia and Brazil.

The main strategy used in the SMEP was to develop local leadership for fostering individual and community engagement for the betterment of public education. In that strategy, local agents from different social fields were prepared to act as “social mobilizers,” who commit

themselves to engage the whole community (Brazil, 2008). Those mobilizers should, then, act voluntarily in their communities by spreading information about the importance of education, by dialoguing with families to encourage their participation in the students' school life and educational councils, and by promoting activities and events that strengthen the family-school-community relationship (Brazil, 2008, 2008a).

However, despite several strategies employed by BMEC to ensure a successful implementation of SMEP in the communities, an important issue emerged: the recurrent demobilization of social mobilizers and citizens. Social mobilizers and other players tended to be highly engaged in the SMEP activities at the beginning of its local implementation, but their participation often faded away over time. On the other hand, I also noticed that some communities and social mobilizers remained engaged in developing activities, even without or after being aware of the termination of SMEP by the new governors that took over BMEC.

3. Framing the purposes and focus of this study

In such a context, the main objective of this study is of identifying factors that may have discouraged, hindered, motivated, or facilitated the engagement of social mobilizers in leading the activities and efforts encouraged by SMEP in their communities. In the BMEC's strategy, the activism of social mobilizers was essential for the success of the implementation of SMEP and its sustainability, however, the government took it for granted. Because of that, and because of strategies fostering individual and collective engagement are important in the Brazilian socio-political scenario, I also have the purpose of offering recommendations for informing and strengthening future policy through this study.

Very little academic research (Antonini, 2012; Santos, 2014) was conducted about SMEP. Records of positive outcomes regarding its performance come from BMEC's reports and

the narratives developed by social mobilizers published on BMEC's blog. The very BMEC suggested that the pragmatism of the actions in the SMEP should incite new study agendas and should benefit from academic research (Brazil, 2015). Finally, there is a gap in exploring the implementation of this national policy at the local level, and no efforts were developed either in trying to understand which factors could be negatively impacting social engagement or in identifying what could be changed to foster or enable participation.

Factors discouraging, hindering, motivating, or facilitating the engagement of social mobilizers in SMEP activities can be multiple and vary from one community and individual to another. Personal and social factors could have influenced the intensity, characteristics, and longevity of the social mobilizers' activism in the different communities. Such factors might be interconnected and multidimensional, which reflects the reality of a social complexity (Dryzek, 2005). From such complexity, I focused the investigation on four broad concepts and their relationship to active engagement of social mobilizers in SMEP activities: sociodemographic characteristics, community capacity, conflicts and power relations, and the structure and strategy of local implementation of the SMEP. I chose to explore these concepts based on an analysis of related literature and theory, the nature of the SMEP as a public policy, and my preliminary observations and experience as a community development practitioner with the SMEP implementation in the selected communities.

Personal and socioeconomic characteristics of participants (such as age, gender, position, religion, education attainment, the field of work) are thought to relate to participation (Brennan, 2006). Moreover, social factors, including power relations and community characteristics can also influence the local leaders' activism. Although Toro and Werneck's (1996) proposal of social mobilization states that power should be equally distributed among participants in the

implementation of SMEP, several authors indicate that the reality is shaped by social structures, inequalities and power disputes, local politics and conflicts, and specific dynamics of each locality, which affects social participation and decision-making (Gaventa 1982, 2006; Taylor, 2011; Lewicki, 2001; Lyon and Driskell, 2011).

In this study, I also investigated aspects related to community capacity, that is the ability of a community to manage assets and to organize for addressing local issues (Brennan & Luloff, 2007), including leadership, agency, local concerns, and social interaction and ties. Finally, I also examined the methodological and structural aspects of the SMEP (organization, orientation, materials, resources, support), as well as the characteristics of the implementation process in the communities. The four research questions that guide this study are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between social mobilizers' sociodemographic characteristics and their engagement in the leadership of activities/efforts suggested by SMEP?
2. What is the relationship between conflicts and power relations and the social mobilizers' engagement in the leadership of activities/efforts suggested by SMEP?
3. What is the relationship between community capacity and the social mobilizers' engagement in the leadership of activities/efforts suggested by SMEP?
4. What is the relationship between the structure and the strategy of local implementation of the SMEP and the engagement of social mobilizers in the leadership of its activities/efforts?

4. Research setting and design

For this research, the communities that compose the Estreito Hydroelectric Plant Region (EHR) offer a unique setting regarding the implementation of the SMEP. The EHR comprises

twelve small towns of two Brazilian states, from two distinctive political regions¹ - among the poorest in the country. All the communities were impacted by the installation of a hydroelectric power plant on the Tocantins River by a consortium of private enterprises in 2011. Because of the negative impacts generated in the region by the undertaking, the financing banks requested the consortium to invest in local and regional development, which attracted several influential Brazilian NGOs to the region to implement projects in the areas of education, health, sanitation, economic and social development, from 2010 to 2015.

SMEP was implemented in the region within this context in 2012, mainly through the organization and support of the NGO Gaia Social. The endeavors for the initial implementation of SMEP were the same and happened concurrently in all the twelve communities in 2012. That process fostered several occasions for social interaction not only of local actors from different social fields but also of social mobilizers of neighboring communities, who were usually brought together to meet and to work in collaboration. Although the excitement of the social mobilizers, their active engagement was also hard to sustain, and the issue of demobilization was noticeable over time, especially after Gaia Social left the region in 2014. However, some of the communities and social mobilizers remained active in developing SMEP activities by the time of this research.

Differences in the level of engagement and the local institutional support to SMEP were also evident during the first two years of its implementation, which had the highest activism in the region. The communities also differ in several other aspects, including the size of population

¹ Maranhão state (MA) - NE (towns: Carolina and Estreito) and Tocantins state (TO) - N (towns: Aguiarnópolis, Babaçulândia, Barra do Ouro, Darcinópolis, Filadélfia, Goiatins, Itapiratins, Palmeirante, Palmeiras do Tocantins and Tupiratins), which are predominantly rural and whose summed population is about 121,670 people (IBGE, 2010). The smallest town (Tupiratins, TO) has 2,097 people, and the largest (Estreito, MA) has 35,835.

and territory, local politics, community dynamics, strategies used and the structure of the SMEP Committee. Thus, they provided a fertile field for identifying a variety of factors affecting the engagement of the social mobilizers and finding differences and similarities in their occurrence.

In this context, this study was designed as an embedded multiple case study (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2015) was adopted, comparing six of the communities (Babaçulândia, Barra do Ouro, Carolina, Darcinópolis, Goiatins, Tupiratins) situated in the EHR. A qualitative research design (Ragin *et al.*, 2004; Maxwell, 2008) was used to collect and analyze data. Methods included semi-structured interviews (between July and December 2017), document analysis, participant observation, and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Reflexivity and triangulation of sources and methods were used to ensure research validity and reliability. Finally, as a theoretical framework, this research is grounded on participatory democratic politics (Boyte, 2004; Fischer, 2000; Freire, 1970), the interactional theory of community and community development (Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Bridger & Alter, 2009; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Wilkinson, 1991, 1999), and the “power cube” and the three dimensions of power proposed by Gaventa (2006) and Lukes (1974).

5. Researcher Stance

I met this study with the passion of a community development practitioner and the curiosity of a researcher. The combination of these two forces guided me through the challenges and delights of this investigative journey. Such a journey also represents the second part of a recurrent cycle in my life, which comprises a period of field practice followed by another of theoretical study and investigation. My professional path has been marked by this cycle of intensive times of work in the field with different communities and people in Brazil, followed by immersive times of study and research in academia. I developed a satisfaction for alternating

between both spaces, which has contributed to shape, complement, and expand my experiences. It also enhanced my perceptions, understandings, knowledge, and sensitivity regarding community, leadership, and local development.

Those circumstances mirror my natural pursuit and passion for both practice and theory. Often my professional experiences have been permeated by the combination of both. Moreover, Paulo Freire - a Brazilian educator and philosopher – had a great influence on my education and beliefs, and I am enthused by his idea of praxis, namely critical reflection upon action, which, in turn, inspires a new action. I believe that the exercise of praxis carries a significant positive, transformative power, which I enjoy applying to my work. In the context of research, combining practical and theoretical perspectives and exercising praxis are reflected in my choice for doing applied research. Praxis is also present in my eager for investigating my own professional experiences and the theories and topics related to those, generating knowledge, recommendations, and insights for better practices in the future.

The story of this study is no different. It was inspired by the work I conducted with twelve communities in the Estreito Hydroelectric Region (EHR) in the Northern and Northeastern Brazil between 2010 and 2013. That practice and my work with education, leadership development, and communities in Brazil brought me to the U.S. in 2013, through a fellowship led by the Fulbright Commission with the purpose of sharing, exchanging, and expanding my professional experiences with community and education. During my Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship year at Penn State, I was able to meet, work, and be mentored by professors that have been working with, and teaching, theories that I could directly relate to my practices in Brazil. The more I became familiar with those theories of community, democracy, leadership, power, and local development, the more I continued analyzing them in comparison to

my field practices and noticing essential correlations. Such a realization thrilled me and encouraged me to engage in my Ph.D. program, with the support of those mentors, who became my advisers and Committee members.

Choosing the theme for this study was also organic for me. During the almost three years of work with the communities of the EHR, especially in the area of education, engagement, and local leadership development, I have become involved in supporting the local implementation of the Brazilian Social Mobilization for Education Plan (SMEP). Having experienced the enthusiasm of those engaged with SMEP in the communities and at the Ministry of Education inspired me to study the policy more deeply and to understand better its impacts in the places where it was implemented. The heart of this study started, then, with my heart connected to the heart of those who loved the program.

Since the beginning, I already knew that I wanted to study SMEP beyond its contributions to the betterment of local education. I was intrigued by its potential contributions and relationship to community development, engagement, and empowerment, and how the participants experienced it. That triggered me, especially because the communities I got to know and work in Brazil were often marked by low individual and social participation and community agency. The existence of power issues and the influence of power holders in the local settings have always caught my attention as well.

However, it took time until I framed which specific part of that story I desired to explore, shaping the purpose and objectives of this study. During my Ph.D. program, I immersed myself in a personal and intellectual process of analyzing SMEP intensively and in different aspects and levels. From there and from reflecting upon my experience, meeting theories and reviewing the literature, and carrying out a scoping visit to the communities in 2015, the specific questions that

guided this study emerged gradually.

It also took time to develop the best way of organizing and telling the story (for me, for those involved, for the different kind of readers), shaping the methods and weaving the facts and findings into the chapters of this dissertation. I found that when you are part of the history of the story you are investigating, as a co-creator of it, the critical and comprehensive analysis of its complexity involves a constant recreation of perceptions and the self. A constant recreation of the story. A story that is committed to rigorous social research at the same time that it acknowledges the subjectivity of the researcher, with my previous experiences and practical knowledge, and abandons the pretenses of value-neutrality (Nettle, 2014).

I recognize my position in the cases of this study as initially of an insider and, then, of a visitor (Nettle, 2014). My previous experience with the EHR communities put me in the position of an insider within the initial implementation of SMEP in those communities (from 2012 to July 2013). However, I also became a visitor, with no contact with the strategies and actions developed by the social mobilizers, community members, and local government after this period. As an insider, I believe that my experiences, perceptions, and tacit knowledge about the communities were great contributors to the communication with the participants of the research and the choice of concepts and variables, the qualitative analysis, and interpretation of the findings. On the other hand, I know that being an insider participant researcher and a known investigator could also bring some risks to the study, such as researcher bias and participant reactivity. Because of that, I took extra caution towards ensuring validity and reliability, which I will discuss in Chapter IV.

Moreover, although their symbiosis, transitioning from a community development practitioner to a researcher was also smooth for me, because I consciously prepared myself for

that and committed to rigor in my research. From the fieldwork experience, I believe the participants could also distinguish between those two roles because of my transparency in conducting this investigative work. The response of the communities to this study during the scoping visit and data collection was very positive and the individuals expressed appreciation for having their story told through this research and taken to another country. I am also committed to the participants and their communities for using this study as an opportunity to give voice to local citizens in planning and policy, through sharing their experiences, perceptions, and local knowledge as contributions to efforts of community development and democratizing politics.

Finally, in the context of the qualitative nature of this study, I believe it is important to provide a reference regarding the values and standpoint that epistemologically grounded that. My eighteen years of passion and work with community development and social engagement in Brazil, my work involvement with critical pedagogy – mainly influenced by Paulo Freire, and my commitment to empowering practices and social justice have influenced both the choices of the framework of this research and myself as an instrument of analysis and interpretation of findings.

From my experience of more than 18 years working with communities in Brazil, I could realize how much power is distributed unevenly at the national and local levels and how this has shaped the culture, the attitudes, and the behaviors of individuals. Because of that, and mainly influenced by Paulo Freire's ideas, I always brought a critical perspective to my work with environmental education, popular education, community, youth leadership development, and theatre for individual agency and social change. I believe in the power and contribution of every individual (in their own lives, their communities, and the world). I also understand that there are social, historical, economic, and cultural structures that end up shaping or conditioning

individuals in the ways they see the world and their ability to live the lives they desire. Such structures and forces may also prevent the individuals to recognize that they could generate the power to promote the changes they would like to see in their realities. Because of that, I am committed to the work of supporting people to find their agency and to encourage them to develop their power by engaging with others in building improvements and changes their desire in their communities and routines. I am also committed to the communities and participants of this study in this way.

Accordingly, this research is, then, epistemologically grounded mainly in the Critical Theory (Guba, 1994), which "describes the human world, not as a system in, or tending to, equilibrium, but as a system characterized by domination, exploitation, struggle, oppression, and power" (Johnstone, 2008, p. 28). In doing so, it attends to show what is wrong with the status quo and intends to produce a work that will be used to promote positive social change (Johnstone, 2008). This perspective also assumes that interacting with elites and struggles over power might limit the emergence of local agency and capacity and impair social participation (Brennan & Israel, 2008).

In this way, this research is interested in power relations and empowerment of local citizens by engaging in the collaborative work for a better public education. This study respects the local knowledge, felt needs, understandings and appropriate solutions also from the perspective of the participants. Finally, in this work, I tried to preserve the voices of the participants by using "in vivo" coding and by running the analysis and coding process in Portuguese, which is their and mine native language. In this way, the risk of having different levels of interpretation was reduced, despite the limitation of having a final translation of the codes and quotes to English made by me, as a second language speaker.

6. Structure of Dissertation

The following chapters of this dissertation will outline the foundations, paths, and findings of the proposed study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed exploration of the SMEP, as well as a review of related literature. Chapter 3 explores the theoretical framework that gives foundation to this study. Chapter 4 describes the methodology and methods used. Chapter 5 describes the process of the SMEP implementation in the EHR. Chapter 6 presents the themes that emerged from the within-cases analysis of each of the six localities. Chapter 7 presents the findings of the cross-case analysis that seeks to answer the research questions. Finally, Chapter 8 includes discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research, policy, and community work.

CHAPTER II - SMEP and Insights from the Literature

Somos todos atores: ser cidadão não é viver em sociedade, é mudá-la.

[We are all actors: being a citizen is not living in society, it is changing it.]

Augusto Boal, theatre practitioner, drama theorist, and political activist, founder of Theatre of the Oppressed

In this chapter I present the Brazilian Social Mobilization for Education Plan (SMEP) created by the Brazilian Ministry of Education (BMEC) in 2008, which is the core case of this study. The purpose of the policy was to enhance societal participation in education, and foster collaboration between schools, families, and communities for the betterment of public education. The main strategy of the government was of developing local leadership (or *social mobilizers*) for implementing SMEP and engaging other residents and players. Although SMEP was very popular among social mobilizers, their demobilization a short time later was an issue in many localities. Because of the importance of the local leadership for the success of the program and scarce investigations about SMEP, the main purpose of this research is to identify factors affecting the engagement (or activism) of social mobilizers in carrying out SMEP locally.

After presenting an overview, strategies, and critique of SMEP in the first section, I will explore the research literature for insights to compose a conceptual framework to guide the investigation of factors affecting activism of social mobilizers. I focused my attention especially on experiences of participatory innovations created by the Brazilian government to promote social participation in governance. To complement that perspective, I also tried to get some insights from the literature regarding sociodemographic characteristics of individuals, aspects of community, and issues related to power and empowerment, which could enlighten other factors in the context of SMEP.

1. Characterizing SMEP

1.1. SMEP's overview

BMEC launched SMEP in 2008, grounding its discourses on the 1988 Brazilian Constitution. The Ministry describes SMEP as “a call to the society for the volunteer work to mobilize families and communities towards the improvement of the quality of public education” (Brazil, 2008). SMEP was part of the *Plan for the Development of Education* (PDE), launched by the Brazilian government the year before (Brazil, 2007). Brazilian PDE is a public policy, developed by experts and government with no public consultation (Antonini, 2013). It provided 28 goals and guidelines (assembled in a document called *All for Education Plan of Goals*) and a set of programs designed to improve education in Brazil at all levels until 2022. The PDE provided a foundation to BMEC's actions for several years, until the new National Plan of Education was finally approved by the Congress in mid-2014. In 2016, SMEP was terminated by the new Brazilian president who took office after the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff.

SMEP had foundations in human rights, ethics, solidarity, tolerance, inclusion, and citizenship (Brazil, 2008). Its main precepts are *the right of all Brazilians to learn* and both *the right and responsibility of the families and communities in the process of learning* (Brazil, 2007). The main discourses used in SMEP's materials (Brazil, 2008, 2012) to inspire engagement are that *education is both a right and a responsibility of all*, that *for improving education, everyone must participate*, and that *handling the Brazilian educational challenge will only be possible when the society incorporates education as a social value*.

According to Santos (2014), the conceptual and operational foundations of SMEP are based on the social mobilization experience and methodology developed by the philosopher and

educator Bernardo Toro. In his work at the NGO *Fundación Social* in Colombia, he led the effort of mobilizing more than 20 thousand schools for a better education (Toro & Werneck, 1996).

1.2. SMEP's strategy of implementation

Overall, the SMEP strategy of implementation (*Figure 1*) consisted of preparing local social leaders, public education managers, officials, professionals, and representatives of organizations to become “social mobilizers,” who should commit themselves to act as volunteers to engage the entire community (Brazil, 2008). Such actors attended workshops delivered by BMEC, in partnership with the Municipal Departments of Education (MDE). After that, social mobilizers and the MDE were invited to create their action plan and to launch SMEP in their communities (Brazil, 2012). The strategy also involved the creation of local SMEP Committees for organizing the actions of social mobilizers and managing the local plan.

The policy also anticipated monitoring, disclosing, and disseminating the performed actions in communities locally and nationally. At the national level, BMEC used to share the actions and achievements of social mobilizers and committees on its website (<http://mse.mec.gov.br/>), a specific blog for SMEP (<http://familiaeducadora.blogspot.com/>), reports (Brazil, 2012; Eliane, 2014), and supporting materials for mobilization. Finally, part of the BMEC's strategy was to form a network of mobilizers (Brazil, 2012), by using such channels and promoting national meetings.

For guiding the mobilization, besides other documents, BMEC compiled a set of actions based on the 28 guidelines of the PDE (Brazil, 2012) in a document named *Mobilization Plan*. According to BMEC, the Plan (document) intended to offer orientation and motivate the mobilizers, by linking the PDE guidelines to suggestions of activities and how to implement them (Brazil, 2008). The focus of the proposed actions was fostering dialogue and spreading

information to families about the importance of education and parental involvement in the students' school life - by giving support at home and by monitoring school's accountability (Brazil, 2008), for instance. It also encouraged the development of activities to enhance the family-school-community relationship, including campaigns of conscientization and invitations for the integration of community members into voluntary actions of mobilization. The agenda also included disseminating the importance of educational management councils, school boards, and the participation of the community for social control.

The Plan provided suggestions based on school best practices, through which the students had achieved good results in BMEC's evaluation (Brazil, 2008b). From those suggestions, each volunteer (individuals or institutions) could elaborate on their action plan, by including key-actors, audience, goals, deadlines, schedule, places, resources, among others (Brazil, 2008a, b). The primary targets of social mobilizers were families, school communities (including parents, students, principals, teachers and staff) and school boards, State and Municipal Departments of Education, public agencies of social control and protection of children and adolescents (councils), and residents in general (Brazil, 2008 a, b).

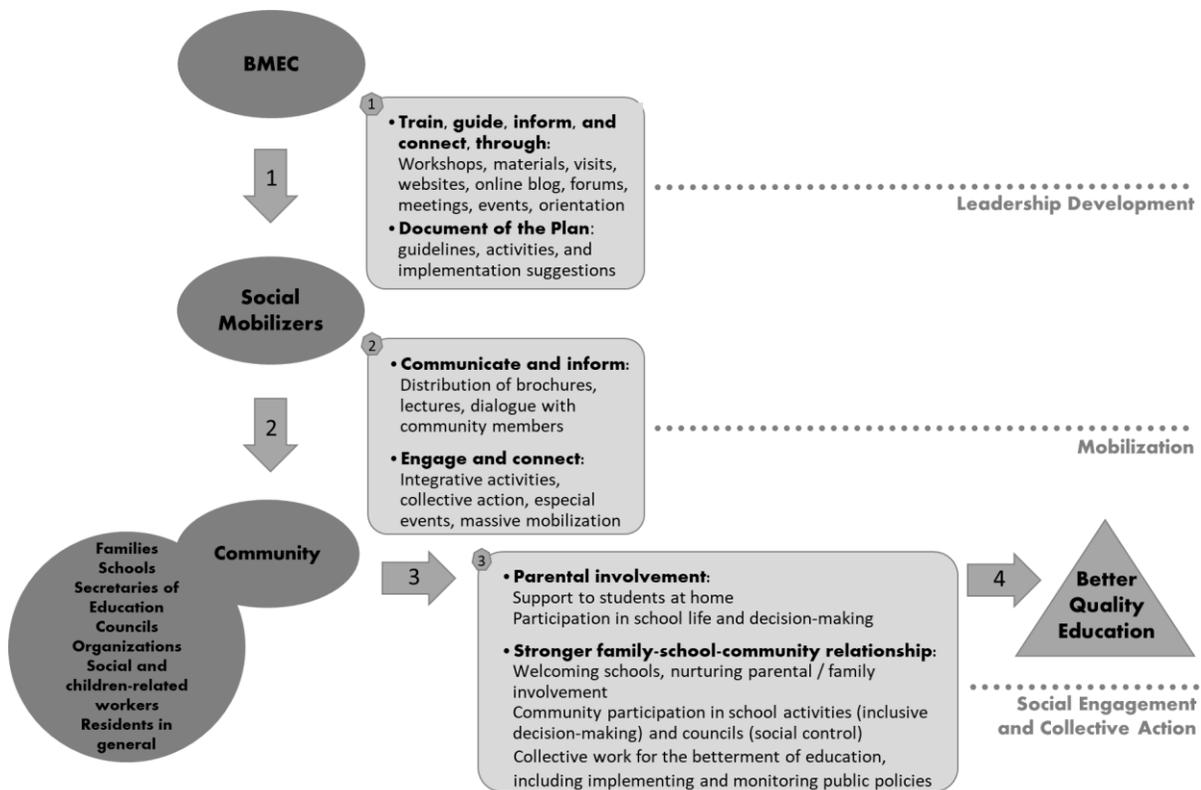


Figure 1. Strategy of local implementation of SMEP

1.3. SMEP local leadership development and social mobilizers

The major investment of BMEC for the implementation of SMEP was in local leadership development. In a general analysis, BMEC employed many strategies for developing local leadership, including delivering workshops, sharing information and documents for guidance and promotion of SMEP, offering examples and benchmark practices for mirroring, providing support and articulation, fostering development of collaborative work and networks (e.g. meetings, exchanging of ideas through its virtual platforms, and the creation of local committees and a national network), stimulating regular dialogue between mobilizers within the community about local education and the societal role in ensuring its quality, encouraging the very practice of mobilization, and the approach of leaders informing other leaders. BMEC expected that, by using those tactics, social mobilizers would be prepared and encouraged to

develop the following actions (Brazil, 2008a, b; Santos, 2014):

1. mobilizing families by disseminating information, promoting dialogue and carrying out activities for enhancing the family-school-community relationship;
2. developing and promoting a local plan for SMEP in the community;
3. creating a local SMEP Committee;
4. requesting the creation of municipal law to set up the local SMEP Day or Week.

The organization of SMEP workshops in a community marked the local implementation of the program and represented the primary instrument for developing social mobilizers. To deliver the workshops, BMEC required the request and the partnership of the local government (MDE), which should also demonstrate a commitment to the democratic management of education and understanding about the importance of the family-school-community interaction (Brazil, 2012).

According to BMEC, these workshops were crucial for developing the local leadership needed for mobilization work and were created under the demand of several social mobilizers who had no familiarity with educational themes (Brazil, 2008a). The workshops were delivered by a representative of BMEC's SMEP team, focusing the curriculum on the following themes: an overview of the organization of the Brazilian education; the presentation of SMEP, and the elaboration of an action plan for implementing and disseminating SMEP locally (Brazil, 2008a, 2014). Usually, local data was not presented or discussed by the instructor.

Besides the Mobilization Plan, BMEC developed materials for supporting the mobilization work and creation of local Committees, including for different types of social mobilizers and partners. An essential guide was a booklet entitled "*Engage in the school life of your children*" (Ministry of Education, n.d.), which was disseminated widely in communities

and supported dialogue between social mobilizers and residents in SMEP activities. Also, the blog created for SMEP not only had the intention of compiling different information and materials, but of connecting social mobilizers from different places, so they could disclose their actions, exchange ideas, and inspire each other (Brazil, 2007a, Santos, 2014). The goal being to facilitate the creation of a national network of social mobilizers and partners, and to motivate and integrate their efforts (Brazil, 2007a).

BMEC envisioned local social leaders as mobilizers, and SMEP offered a set of criteria to the MDE for selecting participants to workshops. According to those criteria, the mobilizers should demonstrate local leadership, previous or current involvement in activities, projects, or work with families, children, youth, and to understand and agree with SMEP's aims (Brazil, 2008a).

BMEC primarily targeted social leaders, public education administrators, education experts, and representatives of organizations to be social mobilizers (Brazil 2008a, b; equipemobilização, 2012). However, SMEP also encouraged the local government to invite a more diverse public to participate in workshops. It also recommended that social mobilizers involved other local and regional players as partners and supporters of their mobilization efforts, such as educators, representatives of school boards, leaders of local faith-based institutions, unions, NGOs, neighborhood associations, community organizations, as well as city councilors, members of the Municipal and State Councils of Education, the local Guardianship Council, the Childhood and Youth Prosecutor, and those working in government programs serving families and social welfare (Brazil, 2008a).

Another critical strategy of leadership development for SMEP was to encourage social mobilizers to organize themselves into local Committees for implementation of the program. The

local SMEP Committees should also work in mobilizing society to value education and in expanding the movement to other people and localities. According to BMEC, the organization of social mobilizers into committees has at least three advantages (Ministry of Education, n.d.). First, the committees would enrich and enhance the effectiveness of the social mobilizers' actions. Second, social mobilizers could share difficulties and learnings and deliberate solutions from different viewpoints. Third, all participants would help plan and carry out activities, with no work overload. BMEC stimulated a shared leadership, in which the local SMEP Committee should be a network to integrate all social mobilizers through horizontal linkages, with decentralization and non-hierarchization (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

The local SMEP Committee should operate through the organization of ongoing meetings (specific or broad) and the implementation of planned actions in the community (Ministry of Education, n.d.). In the specific meetings, members should come together to discuss strategies, evaluation, and internal issues. In broad meetings, members should invite others to learn and disseminate the mobilization plan, or to promote lectures with experts and authorities regarding the situation of local education. In addition, the Committee should provide space for discussion and reflection about the reality of Brazilian education, grounded on information and data provided by BMEC. They should promote dialogue with families and the community and raise awareness about societal commitments and the co-responsibility of all in promoting public education (Brazil, 2008a). They should also develop campaigns and communications, as well as track and evaluate the results of their actions.

In general, SMEP was highly appreciated by those involved, especially social mobilizers. However, its implementation in communities involved several tensions and faced numerous challenges. One important issue involved the demobilization of social mobilizers, which

occurred countrywide and compromised the success of the program. Although all of the strategies were created by BMEC, several social mobilizers did not engage or quickly lost their activism. No investigation or research was done to analyze the issue, which inspired, even more, the development of this study.

2. SMEP - ambivalence and critiques

Finally, I want to highlight some ambivalence and critiques I found about SMEP. The policy carries several tensions, controversies, and dualities, which are not on the focus of this study but could also provide insights for its conceptual framework.

To start, SMEP is a top-down policy, which appropriated the methodology of social mobilization from experiences of a grass-roots organization (*Fundación Social*). On one hand, SMEP is a policy that seems to foster participatory, democratic practices by reinforcing the right of all Brazilians to education and by creating new spaces for societal participation. In those spaces, citizens are invited to work together for the common good and to reconnect to the public life, which is a need advocated by Boyte (2004). It also suggests the collaboration between citizens and experts to solve local issues, as defended by Fischer (2000).

Moreover, SMEP encourages community action, especially by motivating individuals and communities to take agency and collaborate for the betterment of public education. Also, SMEP fosters social interaction within the communities, bringing different actors together, creating opportunities for sharing ideas and concerns, and for developing new social ties. It aims at developing community leadership, cross-sector, and multi-level collaboration. Efforts like those, as suggested by several authors and studies (Wilkinson, 1991, 1999; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Bridger & Alter, 2009; Brennan, Bridger, & Alter, 2013), are vital for the development of the community field and building community capacity for solving issues.

On the other hand, there are critiques related to SMEP, especially regarding its political and methodological foundations: the PDE (Brazil, 2007) and the social mobilization approach proposed by Toro (Toro and Werneck, 1996). In general, they suggest hiding power relations in the creation of the SMEP as a policy and flaws and controversies in its conceptual and methodological approach.

Antonini (2012) criticizes SMEP by arguing it is an instrument used by BMEC to induce citizens to legitimize the PDE, which was developed by experts and the government with no public consultation. She argues that the PDE brought a technocratic perspective to education defended by the Brazilian elite and international neoliberal forces (Da Silva, 2010; Saviani, 2007). In addition, the PDE is evaluation-oriented, using quantitative indicators to measure the quality of education and school performance, which was also criticized by several authors (Da Silva, 2010; Ribeiro, Ribeiro & Gusmão, 2005; Saviani, 2007). They complain this approach raises pressure over results and brings the mistaken idea that broad publication of school indexes to society would itself force the betterment of public education. According to the authors, such an idea masks the relevant accountability of the government and the private sector regarding issues such as infrastructure, teachers training, career opportunities, and wages, among others.

Furthermore, SMEP encouraged citizens to monitor school indexes. Some authors argue that those indicators are made by experts and technocrats and are difficult to be interpreted by communities (Da Silva, 2010; Ribeiro et al., 2005), resulting in numbers devoid of meaning. Also, the results do not come back to the teachers for in-depth interpretative analysis and end up reinforcing an idea of a bad-quality education, which falls on teachers', students', and parents' flaws, and that again mask symptoms of a more complex problem. Finally, Ribeiro et al. (2005) questions if those indicators are representative of the conceptions and values of local people,

especially marginalized ones, regarding what they believe constitutes a quality education.

Concerning the SMEP conceptual and methodological foundations (Toro and Werneck, 1996), Gohn (2008) argues that the voluntarism of the collective action proposed by the authors prevents the analysis and identification of groups of interests, conflict, and power struggles. Also, to Gohn (2008), although the creativity, innovation, and local knowledge are invoked in that approach, the genesis and causes of the processes of exclusion and poverty are not analyzed, with no space for problematization, or critical thinking, which goes back to the root of the problem. Finally, Gohn (2008) and Antonini (2012) affirm it is a controlled mobilization, where the participation is induced or built by some actors or institutions. In this way, the participation is not organic, nor created by a shared situation of exclusion or grievance, as it is seen in social movements. Instead, it is strategic or instrumental, created by an individual or entity to achieve goals.

Despite those critiques, Santos (2014, 2015) has a positive view of SMEP and its contribution to local education. Also, the assessment and reports developed by BMEC between 2009 and 2013 show some positive results from the implementation of the program. However, Santos (2015) still raises some questions regarding the potential of SMEP as a conduit of social participation in school life.

In this context, the reality is that SMEP was barely studied, and most of the assumptions and critiques do not target the program directly or investigate its practical application. Thus, there are gaps in understanding the effectiveness of SMEP and the efficacy of the strategies and means used by BMEC and communities for its local implementation. The demobilization of social mobilizers is a key issue in this puzzle and deserves attention and closer investigation.

In this way, the primary purpose of this study is to identify aspects influencing the

activism of social mobilizers both positively and negatively. In the next sections, I will explore research literature to get insights for building a conceptual framework that will guide my investigation. In this context, experiences of other spaces created to foster social participation by the Brazilian government can be helpful. Also, research in other fields, such as social engagement, community capacity, and leadership development can provide additional ideas of factors influencing participation. I start by presenting a background of participatory democracy in Brazil that will allow comparison of SMEP with other innovations created by the government.

3. Background – participatory democracy in Brazil

In 1986, Brazil became a democracy after 20 years of military dictatorship. Two years later, the Brazilian Constitution (Brazil, 1988) was instituted. The 1990s' resulted in the institutionalization of public consultation, associations, unions, experts and business segments in the formulation of development projects and public policies (Milani, 2008). Also, trends in reforms in Latin America and the internal pressure of social actors and popular movements for redefining the relationship between the state and the civil society, resulted in placing social participation as a central element of democratic reform (Jacobi, 2002; Milani, 2008).

The 1988 Constitution sanctioned the decentralization of policy-making and established mechanisms that encouraged popular participation (Coelho & Nobre, 2004; Coelho, 2007; Milani, 2008). Some mechanisms include cooperation with associations and social movements in planning and the direct participation of citizens in the administrative management of education, social assistance, social security, health, and children and adolescents (Coelho, 2007; Milani, 2008). That has fostered an extensive institutional structure for citizen participation, including public hearings, management councils, conferences, participatory budgeting, and deliberative bodies within regulatory agencies (Coelho, 2007; Coelho, Pozzoni & Cfuentes, 2005). Those

innovations can be identified as '*invited spaces*,' in the classification created by Gaventa (2006) in democratic participation, where the government and authorities give citizens the opportunity to participate and possibly influence policies, discourses, decisions, and relationships that affect their interests and well-being.

In the 1990s, there was a reaffirmation of the state as protagonist in ensuring social rights. Also, a plan was created to form a partnership between the government and civil society to overcome weaknesses of the welfare state (such as access to and quality of public education, health, and social services), which were broadly debated (Coelho & Nobre, 2004; Cornwall et al, 2001). Consequently, municipal governments gained constitutional strength and a central role in promoting civic participation in the management of social policy (Coelho & Nobre, 2004). A massive structure of councils for social policy management was created, "with responsibilities in formulating and managing policy for different areas such as education, health, and welfare" (p.33). These councils, which were established at the local, state, and national levels, must be represented by 50 percent civilian society, 25 percent government, and 25 percent service providers. Other important functions include taking suggestions from the population to the government and to bring governmental projects to the citizens.

According to Milani (2008), participatory practices in Brazil keep evolving according to social, historical, and geographic concerns. Nevertheless, civic participation in Brazil in those instances is still weak and ineffective, which is accentuated in needy communities. For example, there are lots of empty chairs in spaces for social control and public consultation, forged participation of citizens in council meetings, and inadequate understanding concerning the function and importance of such innovations and their activities (Sousa Coelho, 2012; Longhi & Canton, 2011). The voices of marginalized groups appear weak (Sousa Coelho, 2012). Also,

Gohn (2011) claims that the councils are losing their strength as set up by law.

To some authors, the democratic promise in Brazil has been compromised by a persistent authoritarian political culture in the Brazilian state, a weak associational life, and resistance from both state actors and society (Coelho, 2007; Carneiro, 2002; Andrade, 1998). According to Coelho (2007), participatory mechanisms such as management councils will fail if civil society is not organized, and the political authorities are not committed to enhancing social participation.

In education, although the 1988 Constitution affirms social participation as a means and an end for promoting education, there are several issues in the invited spaces. The lack of engagement of parents in school life has been indicated as a governmental concern (MEC, 2008; MEC 2015; Santos, 2014). Lima et al (2001) classifies such lack of parental involvement in four categories: voluntary nonparticipation; induced nonparticipation; nonparticipation by omission; and announced nonparticipation. The barriers to parental participation being indicated are multiple, from a lack of interest by parents and schools, to personal characteristics and structural conditions (demographics, etc.), or to a problematic relationship with schools – including teachers, principals and staff (LaPoint et al, 2010; Paro, 2000; Sheldon, 2002).

4. Situating SMEP among Brazilian participatory innovations

SMEP can be, then, situated inside the innovations created for establishing new relationships between the society and the state regarding the public, fostering participatory democracy. However, although it was also developed by the federal government as an ‘invited space’ (Gaventa, 2006) for participation, it differs from the other participatory initiatives in Brazil by several aspects. First, social participation is not institutionalized as in the case of councils, conferences, and participatory budget. The structure of SMEP is loose. Even when BMEC suggests the creation of local SMEP Committees to organize and manage the activities,

the structure and characteristics of the local implementation of SMEP and social mobilization recalls upon the decisions of the local government and the organization and activism of social mobilizers, who receive some guidance through SMEP workshops, materials, and the Mobilization Plan. The second level of engagement - of the mobilized community to collaborate with schools and other players for the betterment of public education - is even more open.

Second, no funding is provided by the federal government for the local implementation of SMEP and the development of activities by the social mobilizers, which is all voluntary and may rely on the support of local public funding that was not initially designated for that. Third, there is no assigned representation of the government and the civil society, as in the case of councils, for the participation or the leadership of SMEP. Although BMEC provided recommendations of who should be prepared as social mobilizers, become partners and supporters of SMEP activities, and the main public targeted for mobilization, the call is for the engagement of all.

Fourth, for the implementation of SMEP, BMEC uses an innovative strategy for government practices, which is of developing community leadership for fostering social participation. Such an approach is usually used in Brazil by NGOs, especially in the North and Northeast regions (Avritzer, 2008), to build community capacity. Social participation incited by SMEP, then, takes ways closer to social movements and community action, including a mobilization for participation in other instances and spaces for creating the public good, such as councils and schools. Also, in the SMEP perspective, deliberation, which is an essential attribute of the other spaces of participatory democracy (Freire, 1970; Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004), is not the instrument through which social participation takes place. Instead, the citizen engagement at the first level (social mobilizers) occurs through the organization and activism for a massive mobilization of the community, usually using information, communication, and the development

of attractive activities as tools for encouraging the engagement of others.

Finally, more than creating opportunities for citizen participation in public policy, planning, and social control, the proposal of SMEP seems to call the society for a hands-on approach of co-responsibility in producing the common good and the betterment of public services. In this way, it seems to lean towards propositions for deepening democracy (Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004; Kettering Foundation, 2015), which seek to reconnect citizens to the public life in their routines, beyond being mere recipients of the government.

Authors recognize that social participation is hard to take place and must to be constantly nurtured, especially in societies dominated by technocrats and expert knowledge in public life (Fischer, 2000). The disconnection of citizens from public life, which is accentuated by the cultural and political context in Brazil over the past, makes social participation even more challenging. The proposition of SMEP could be an effort towards contributing to some changes, at least in the educational field.

5. Defining a framework for getting insights from previous research

In the strategy of SMEP, it seems clear that the success of achieving higher social participation depends first on the activism of social mobilizers. I assume that their engagement responds, in part, to the effectiveness of the strategies developed by BMEC and the attributes and circumstances of the implementation of SMEP in their localities. Aspects related to their individual characteristics, social relations, and structures present in their communities could also influence their engagement. For getting insights to guide the investigation of such a complexity of factors influencing the engagement of social mobilizers almost from the ground-up, it is important to resort to previous research on other participatory mechanisms in Brazil and different bodies of literature.

Despite the differences, SMEP still shares with those institutionalized spaces for social participation in Brazil, the attribute of being an innovation created by the federal government to promote social engagement. Despite the almost absence of research focusing on SMEP, there is a significant amount of studies on the literature regarding those other innovative participatory experiences in Brazil. Most of them concern councils and are in the field of public health (Oliveira, 1996; Sousa Coelho, 2002; Coelho & Nobre, 2004; Coelho 2007; Santos Filho & Gomes 2007). My assumptions are that the experiences of the local implementation and functioning of those structures can provide some clues for developing a framework for investigating the local leadership engagement in SMEP.

Also, the engagement of social mobilizers according to the strategy of SMEP carries some attributes and occurs in circumstances that may relate to topics explored by a diversity of studies in the social sciences literature. For instance, social mobilizers are trained and encouraged to act as community leaders in their localities. Their leadership activism is focused on creating efforts that, in turn, will result in the engagement of others for the public good and enhance democratic practices. It also requires continuous social interaction and efforts for mobilizing and organizing others. Their activism should also foster and be nurtured by the development of networks of interaction that create capacity for collective action. Moreover, the leadership and activism fostered by BMEC are voluntary, non-institutionalized, and loose in structure and organization. Also, it takes place at the local level, in the community setting, which by itself is run by rules, cultural aspects, and social, political, and power structures, that may offer assets and challenges for individual and collective participation.

Thus, to complement the pursuit for more insights to compose the conceptual framework for guiding this research, I will also consult some studies in the areas of community leadership,

agency, and development, community action, and engagement at the local level, social participation, volunteerism, and social movements, in the next sections.

6. Aspects influencing citizen engagement

6.1. Contributions from experiences and studies of social participation in Brazil

The research literature related to the participatory innovations in governance in Brazil does not focus specifically on factors affecting the participation of citizens in those spaces but provide some clues on what may encourage or hinder it. Jacobi (2002) affirms that the different dimensions of social participation show the need for living with or overcoming several sociopolitical and cultural conditionings. Several aspects that are broadly mentioned in the literature related to the Brazilian cultural and political context (Oliveira, 1996; Sousa Coelho, 2002; Coelho & Nobre, 2004; Coelho 2007; Santos Filho & Gomes 2007; Milani, 2008; Jacobi, 2002). Those include challenges to social engagement due to the dissociation of citizens from the public life, the mainstream understanding of the government as the provider of the public good, and the novelty that such structures represent for the state and the civil society, which also creates resistance from both sides.

For instance, Santos Filho and Gomes (2007) noticed that the lack of practice of participatory public management creates resistance from governmental institutions, and Oliveira (1996) found that public managers and professionals perceive the lay citizens as not capable of contributing. Moreover, Jacobi (2002) presents findings of citizens perceiving governmental action for solving environmental issues at the neighborhood level as highly more efficient than community action. Besides, some authors (Sousa Coelho, 2002; Longhi & Canton, 2011) show that participation is also hindered because citizens lack understanding the functioning and the importance of spaces and opportunities for social engagement. Finally, Jacobi (2002) also

presents a positive perspective that the sociopolitical and cultural conditions not necessarily have been preventing a diversity of forms of social participation to emerge. The author also emphasizes the importance of the government to promote educative campaigns and efforts to inform and orient the population towards greater co-responsibility and engagement for creating the common good.

Moreover, some authors mention issues related to the political culture predominant in invited spaces for social participation, which is centralized, bureaucratic, and technocrat, and represents challenges to the engagement of lay citizens (Oliveira, 1996; Milani, 2008; Sousa Coelho, 2012). In practice, for instance, they found citizens having difficulty in using the operational systems of public management and understanding the terminology and the language of experts, which ended up dominating those spaces and inhibiting participation. In the U.S., Fischer (2000) also discusses the cultural dominance of specialized knowledge in public issues and the devaluation of the situational practical wisdom and local knowledge of lay citizens, advocating they should work together in planning and problem-solving. He advocates for collaborative spaces that enable social participation and the contributions of lay citizens through deliberation of issues and solutions. In those spaces, experts should work as “specialized citizens”, by helping to integrate the different kinds of knowledge and acting as an “interpretive mediator” (p. 80) between the specialized knowledge and competing local perspectives.

Other authors (Dominguez, 2007; Milani, 2008; Sousa Coelho, 2012; Longhi & Canton, 2011) discuss the structure and institutionalization of spaces for social participation. Dominguez (2007) and Sousa Coelho (2012) pointed out to political and structural issues in municipal councils, such as a lack of representation, parity, funding, and autonomy in managing resources, which impacts organicity, autonomy, and social participation. There are also different positions

regarding the institutionalization of social participation. Milani (2008) defends the creation of institutional and formal spaces for social participation. For him, those formal spaces may initiate the consolidation of social participation in Brazil, changing traditional relations between social actors, and opening opportunities to the inclusion of other voices. On the other hand, Longhi and Canton (2012) do not believe in the effectiveness of institutional spaces for social participation. They defend the mobilization and organization of the population through alternative non-institutional means for getting more power in solving issues and ensuring their rights.

Several authors provide insights regarding who participates, or is likely to participate, in invited spaces created by the government. Milani (2008) points out that the predominant participation of resident men and women in the participatory budget varied among different cities in other countries, such as in Santo Domingo, Asserí, and Hilden. He also refers to research carried out by Fedozzi (2000) between 1995 and 1997 in Southern Brazil, which found a change from equal participation of women and men, usually younger than 41 years and with elementary school degree, to the predominant participation of married women, older than 34 years, with elementary school degree and that were active in neighborhood associations. Finally, Milani (2008) also informed that the North and Northeast are the regions in Brazil with less experience in social participation in those spaces.

Other authors also discuss issues of the local representativeness of those who participate in invited spaces. Jacobi (2002) found that, although the encouragement by the local government, the mobilization of residents to participate was highly associated with the level of engagement, organization, and pressure existent in the neighborhoods. He found that actors with previous experience in social engagement and living in places with the higher agency were more likely to participate. Moreover, Sousa Coelho (2012) points out to the disadvantage in the participation of

citizens compared to representatives of the government and other organizations, because they might lack time, transportation, and institutional support. The author also defends that the system favors groups that are more organized and disfavor actors that are more vulnerable. Likewise, Jacobi (2002) defends the need for enhancing the plurality of actors participating for breaking the dominant political culture, including by strengthening ties of solidarity.

In this context, some authors also suggest that the institutionalized participation can also be distorted and become an instrument to maintain power structures or to give power to individual interests at the expense of the common good. Sousa Coelho (2012) and Oliveira (1996) suggest that the institutionalization of mechanisms of social participation may become an instrument to maintain the status quo and power relations in society. According to Valla (1998) and Antonini (2014), social participation could be distorted and used merely as a form of legitimizing state policy. In this sense, the participatory discourse would be suitable to old ways of exerting power (Oliveira, 1996), in its invisible form (Gaventa, 1982, 2006).

Individuals and groups could also try to interfere and use social participation for the benefit of their specific interests (Sousa Coelho, 2012). Cruz et al. (2012) found that a group of leaders used the Municipal Health Council as a space for complaints, accentuating hostilities instead of collaboration. Milani (2008) also states that social participation in institutionalized spaces can, at the same time, bring corporate interests to processes of decision making and give voice to subjects that usually are economically and politically less powerful.

Finally, other several issues regarding power are also present in the literature of social participation in invited spaces in Brazil, which could impair the involvement of citizens. They mention hierarchies, corruption, political patronage, disputes between players, and the dependency on the local government. Milani (2008), for instance, found that hierarchies

involving school principals and other actors inhibited the participation of the latter in councils of education. Likewise, Jacobi (2002) points out that significant progress in the relationship school-community was hindered mainly by the resistance of school principals. He found resistance by the school management and faculty centered in the prejudice regarding the deliberative feature of the council and in questioning the decentralization of power in governance of schools. The author emphasizes the difficulties in breaking the dominant political culture (bureaucratic and centralized), despite efforts of the administration to enhance the quality of work in education.

Other authors stress the centrality of the local government for the functioning of participatory institutions and fostering social participation. Sousa Coelho (2012) highlights that public health councils, besides depending on the will of public administrators, also rely on the reproduction of state administrative procedures which implies a strong dependence of those popular representative entities on the state. From a positive standpoint, Jacobi (1999) also found that the political will of municipal administrators was central for helping to articulate and create participation to face the challenges, polemics, and complexities of local environmental issues. The author also stresses the importance of breaking traditional practices of political patronage between public administrators and residents and organizations for enhancing democratic practices of participation.

6.2. Contributions from volunteerism

In the strategy of SMEP, the participation of social mobilizers is a voluntary effort. Therefore, the literature on volunteerism could also provide insights for this study about what drives individuals to participate initially and what keeps them engaged. Olson (2019) highlights that Wilson (2000) has summarized findings explaining volunteerism in the literature into three

main perspectives. The first one focuses on individual characteristics that facilitate or lead a person to volunteer. Those include subjective aspects (beliefs, values, and motives), commitment (to a group, role, purpose, or task), demographics (age, gender, marital status, and race), and their human capital (education, income, work). The second one examines the social capital or resources (networks, relationships, and status) of the individual that help to sustain one's participation. Finally, the third perspective explores the conditions and context (community, neighborhood, school, organization, rural or urban settings) in which their engagement occurs.

6.3. Contributions from other studies

The social mobilization proposed by SMEP takes place at the community level. BMEC developed local leadership for SMEP by training influent residents or average citizens to inform, engage, and organize others in their localities. In this context, several studies show that issues related to the local socio-politico and cultural contexts and the organization of the local society matter to social participation. They comprise conditionings, such as rules, relations, structures, dynamics, attitudes, traditions, and resources that could either be assets or challenges to participation. In the next sections, then, I will turn to some topics in the literature that could provide some more insights for composing a conceptual framework for guiding this study.

6.3.1. Sociodemographics characteristics

Individuals' attributes and socioeconomic characteristics of participants are thought to relate to social participation (Babbie, 1998; Brennan, 2006; Brennan & Lullof, 2007; Milani, 2008; Staeheli & Clarke, 2003; Sundblad & Sapp, 2011; Finlay et al., 2011; Peterson et al, 2015; Winston, 2015; Olson, 2019). Scholars often utilized them as control variables. Several researchers also investigate those to characterize who participates, to see if they relate to predispositions or obstacles to participation or represent conditionings for engagement, and to

identify how they can influence the degree of citizens' involvement in their communities.

Gender, age, marital status, education attainment, and employment status are variables that are commonly measured in engagement and community studies. Moreover, Staeheli & Clarke (2003), showed that employment and occupation and the attributes of the household could either hinder or facilitate engagement.

6.3.2. Issues related to community

It is widely acknowledged the importance of strengthening community-based initiatives to boost the ability of local actors to be effective in social action and engagement for positive change, resilience, and community development (Apaliyah et al., 2012; Emery et al., 2013). Several studies involving community (including action, leadership, capacity, and development) or individual and collective engagement at the local level can provide insights into the development of motivations and capabilities for action. Some of them point out factors that initiate action (motivators, enablers, and predispositions). Others are factors that are developed or achieved through action (such as skills, social resources, desired outcomes, empowerment, agency, other benefits). Some of them also represent factors that can support sustaining action.

Collective or community action is the process of individuals coming together to address common issues and to improve the wellbeing of those sharing a locality (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1991). According to several authors, community action requires the purposeful involvement and social interaction of local people through which they share their concerns, ideas, knowledge, skills, and resources to improve conditions and the common good in their locality (Morrissey, 2000; Theodori, 2004; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Matarrita-Cascante & Luloff, 2008; Brennan & Israel, 2009). Bridger et al. (2011) defend that the success of collective action is determined by the process of interaction and collaboration, and not by its outcome.

Interaction creates motives and capabilities for action (Wilkinson, 1991; Brennan & Israel, 2009; Bridger et al., 2011; Olson, 2019). Brennan and Luloff (2007) found social interaction of Pennsylvania residents positively associated with community agency. Likewise, Matarrita-Cascante and Luloff (2008) found a correlation between greater community participation and greater social interaction.

Likewise, the recognition of shared concerns about the locality – or local felt needs – and the desire of changing them, is also another precursor and motivator for action (Wilkinson, 1991). Complementing this idea, the literature of social movements (Toro & Werneck, 1996; Gohn, 2008; Nettle, 2016) also shows the centrality of shared grievances for driving the individual and collective engagement.

Social fields, awareness of local issues, and opportunities to act are developed through interactions, and the creations of connections (or bonds) called social ties (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1972). According to Granovetter (1973), social ties are relationships that connect individuals within a social network, and that can be categorized as *weak* (distant or loose) or *strong* (close or tight-knit). Both are important for keeping people informed, creating opportunities to act, and greater concern about the community (Granovetter, 1973; Wilkinson, 1991; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Wilson & Sanyal, 2013). Both ties are established and strengthened through interaction.

In a comparative study, Brennan and Luloff (2007) found that strong ties were positively related to community agency in Pennsylvania, while weak ties were also associated with community agency. According to Moran (2005), through weak ties, individuals can access new knowledge, ideas, networks, and fresh or more timely information. Also, Granovetter (1985) and Moran (2005) found that sharing experience is an essential driver of trust and engagement.

Moreover, the creation of networks of interaction across social fields enhances the community field, which is one precursor and motivator for the development and engagement in community action (Wilkinson, 1991).

Some authors recognize cross-sector partnership initiatives and the actions of non-governmental organizations as allies in developing local leadership and in building individual and local capacity for action (Hustedde and Woodward, 1996; Avritzer, 2008; Emery et al., 2013). According to Taylor (2011), driving forces for social change and participation can be mobilized through networks, by which alternative systems of meaning, ways of acting, and values could be learned and transformed.

According to Brennan and Luloff (2007), “community agency and corresponding development can be seen as the process of building relationships that increase the capacity of local people to act” (p. 54). Although conflict is inevitable within a community, when a local society has cohesiveness and ingroup relations (Luloff, 2008), their capacity to deal with conflict or a threat increases their ability to act.

Finally, community leadership is an important driver and promoter of collective engagement for local well-being. According to several studies (Apaliyah et al., 2012; Hustedde and Woodward, 1996; Pigg, 1999; Wituk et al., 2009), a community that has strong leadership and civic engagement is more likely to have a better quality of life and more effective local government. Besides, there is evidence that good civic leadership promotes critical thinking in the public arena (Apaliyah et al., 2012). Also, communities that nurture diverse leadership tend to have a vision of what they want to become and know how to attain their goals (Hustedde and Woodward, 1996).

According to Wituk et al. (2009), “community leaders can help address local challenges

by agreeing to educate themselves and to adopt useful leadership skills and concepts while increasing social capital by bringing people together” (p. 90). Moreover, researchers (Apaliyah et al., 2012; Emery et al., 2013) show that enhancing knowledge about the community and leadership skills (human and social capital) in participants of community leadership development programs has contributed to increased community agency and capacity, that could be measured by increase in community capitals (human, social, financial, cultural, political, built and natural).

Leaders are also crucial for connecting individuals and organizing the collective for community action (Wilkinson, 1991). In her study with community gardens, Nettle (2015) uses a parallel of contentious movements with more constructive ways of social action - a prefigurative form of activism. Such activism implies direct action for creating an alternative to the social world it criticizes, through the development of cumulative small changes, such as in the case of SMEP. The author stresses out the influence of the experience of those leaders in organizing and to the importance of knowing or creating a repertoire of actions to guide the collective. Finally, some studies (Payne & Bennett, 1999; Shiarella et al., 2000) found previous community leadership participation linked to actual participation or intended future participation.

6.3.3. Power and Empowerment

A. Conceptualizing power

In the framework of social participation, it is also fundamental to consider issues of power. Several scholars and practitioners give attention to power issues in social and political sciences, community development, and community psychology research (Fischer & Sonn, 2007; Gaventa, 1982, 2006; Hymam & Malenka, 2001; Chistens & Perkins, 2007; Brennan & Israel, 2008; Domhoff, 2007). Power and the ways of changing its effects are fundamental to processes of social change, community development, and political life (Chistens & Perkins 2007; Brennan

& Israel, 2008; Hyman & Malenka, 2001). The literature concerning power and its implications in several phenomena and socio-political topics is vast and could provide some insights for this study.

Brennan & Israel (2008) points out to the lack of homogeneity in the conceptualization of power and its complexity. Power is complex in its forms, mechanisms, dimensions, levels, and consequences. There are also complexities in the historical contexts, cultural backgrounds, economic forces, and local capacities that shape power structures. According to Chistens and Perkins (2007), even empowerment efforts lack a clear definition of the power against which they are functioning.

Power is a plural concept. Hyman & Malenka (2001) suggest that there are two main perspectives of power in the literature. In one, power is conceived as an attribute, or as something that can be possessed and accumulated (power is a capability of the holder). In the other one, power is relational, or existent through interactions (power exists only if given meaning but all parties in a relationship). The same authors define power as “the ability to accomplish something, to act, to perform, to produce, to get something done that would not be otherwise – to create change” (p.126). To Luke (1974), power occurs when A exercises power over B, affecting B in a manner contrary to B’s interests. To Brennan & Israel, (2008), power most reflects “the ability to act or influence the ability of others or either act or choose a path of inaction” (p. 82).

Taylor (2011) and Gaventa (2006) point out that some see power as a zero-sum concept. For one to gain power, the other must lose it, which often involves the idea of conflict and power struggles. Others see power not as a finite resource, but as fluid and accumulative, which can be used, created, shared by actors in their networks in different ways and settings, in a positive-sum.

Power can be a negative trait, when to hold power is to exercise control of others, such as in Luke's (1974) perspective, or in a positive perspective, related to the capacity and agency to be applied for positive action, such as in Hymam & Malenka's (2001) and from other authors' (Gaventa, 2006; VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002; Kabeer, 1994) standpoints.

In this scenario, VeneKlasen & Miller (2002) provide a useful overview that distinguishes the negative and positive connotations of power (or power relations) used by scholars and practitioners. The perspective of *power 'over'* is the most commonly recognized and can be associated with repression, domination, coercion, force, and abuse. Gaventa (2006) referred to this form as the "ability of the powerful to affect the actions and thought of the powerless" (p.24). Power is a win-lose relationship, and new opportunities in decision making and leadership must be redefined to foster more democratic forms of power (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002).

Also, VeneKlasen & Miller (2002) indicate that there are some more collaborative ways of exercising and using power, which create the possibility of establishing more egalitarian relationships and democratic practices. The notion of *power 'to'* is related to the capacity to act, to the potential to shape one's own life and the world, to exercise agency, and to make voices heard. The idea of *power 'with'* is based on mutual support and collaboration and refers to the cooperation through partnerships or processes of collective action and association. Finally, *power 'within'* refers to gaining the sense of self-identity, self-worth, self-knowledge, self-confidence, awareness, and hope, which can drive or provide capabilities for the individual's engagement in transformative action. The development of power in any or all of these points can also be associated with the idea of empowerment.

According to (Lyon et al., 2010), every process of social participation is permeated

by power relations that can constrain or enable individual and collective engagement. In this context, those four notions of power we can help to situate power as a factor that, in a multiplicity of ways, can prevent, drive, allow, or enhance the engagement of individuals and their collaboration or collective action in decision-making, problem-solving, and the creation and management of the public good. In the case of SMEP, issues related to power in its different ways could be influencing the activism of social mobilizers either negatively or positively.

For instance, the power *of* the social mobilizers to engage could be hindered by the interference of the power of others *over* their involvement or the implementation of SMEP activities. On the contrary, their activism could be nurtured as they develop power *with* others through collaboration and the collective action in their communities. The power *with* could also be ruined by conflicts, self-centered interests, and power disputes that could discourage participation and collaboration. Also, the power *within* could be a driver to initial engagement or be developed through processes of collective participation, sustaining engagement.

B. The power structure of the community

Power is also seen as dynamic, multidimensional, changing according to context, circumstance, and interest (Gaventa, 2006; VeneKlasen & Miller, 2002; Hyman et al.; 2001; Chistens & Perkins, 2007; Brennan & Israel, 2008). Therefore, in the context of social participation at the community level, it is essential to consider issues of the distribution and structure of power in a locality (Freire, 1970; Dahl, 1961; Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Hyman et al., 2001; VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; Taylor, 2003; Gaventa, 2006; Brennan & Israel, 2008; Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 2006; Lyon & Driskell, 2012). Hyman & Malenka. (2001) defend that the challenges of democracy, participation, and social action requires the communities and community developers to identify and to address the structures of power in a community. The

authors point out that a community action may be carried out either by the average citizen or powerful leaders and suggests that one central tool for effective action is to understand the forms of power that are available and the political will of utilizing them effectively.

Some discussion and studies in the literature regard the power structure of a community (Dahl, 1961; Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 2006; Lyon & Driskell, 2012). One central discussion involves two different perspectives: the pluralist model and the elite model. The pluralist perspective (Dahl, 1961) assumes that, naturally, participation, decision-making, and power are spread more broadly in a community, and that the power structure makes decisions on behalf of the entire collective. Although recognizing that the distribution of power may be unequal, the assumption is the political openness leads to the prevalence of the common interest. On the other hand, the elitist perspective (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Lukes, 1974) defends that power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of people (or elites). This dominant group could be or not be in formal positions of power, but they can influence decision-making and the political agenda, by also using different forms of power to exclude individuals and their issues from participation and the public arena to defend their interests. Finally, some defend that those perspectives coexist in every community to some extent (Hyman et al., 2001; Lyon & Driskell, 2012). According to them, what differs one community from the other is how much influence the collective or the dominant groups have and how power is used.

In this context, then, one can assume that social participation would be facilitated in societies that are more pluralistic. On the other hand, the concentration of power on the hands of few individuals, for instance, due to their formal positions and job titles, socio-economic conditions, reputation, political influence, and human and social capitals, could represent challenges or obstacles to social participation. It could also represent a higher dependence of the

community on the political will of those power holders.

Moreover, in structures where power is more concentrated, it is likely that those who hold more power have the interest in defending their positions and in maintaining the local structure and *status quo* (Gaventa, 1980; Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Lukes, 1974; Lyon et al., 2010).

Gaventa (1988), in his awarded study in the Appalachian Valley, found that quite a quiescence of community has highly associated to the result of subtle power relations (invisible power) that foster a sense of powerless in the non-elite. That led to an apparent consensus and quiescence, engineered by power relations that shape patterns of non-conflict.

One of Gaventa's (1980) most important contribution was to show that power relations in the community are much more complicated than previous research and that they must be evaluated in a historical perspective. By exploring the nature and mechanisms of power, grounded on other American political science authors (Dahl, 1961; Polsby, 1963; Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Lukes, 1974), Gaventa (1980) presented a model that suggests power and powerless are connected and re-enforced by each other. His model considers three dimensions of power, which must be viewed as interrelated and accumulative, strengthening each other.

The first dimension of power (*visible power*) is characterized by the prevalence of one group over another through superior bargaining resources (Gaventa, 1980), based on the pluralist view. The second dimension (*hidden power*) is based on Bachrach and Baratz (1970)'s ideas that power is exercised not just upon participants in the decision-making processes, but also towards the exclusion of certain participants and issues altogether in these arenas. Through values, institutions, and procedures, an advantaged elite controls the actual emergence of issues and their ability to be addressed in formal settings, and the issues of the powerless fail to emerge in the political systems (Gaventa, 1980; Brennan & Israel, 2009).

Finally, the third dimension (*invisible power*), evolving Lukes' (1974) ideas represents the social construction of meanings and patterns that nurture a sense of powerless among certain groups, affecting their consciousness about their power. Power, thus, is exerted by some groups over others by influencing, framing, or defining what they want, including their conceptions of necessities, possibilities, and strategies in situations of latent conflict. Shaped by social, political, and historical conditions, nonparticipation or quiescence emerges when powerless are manipulated by elites through myths, information control, communication, the process of socialization ideas and adopt the ideologies dictated by them. In this way, routines, internalization of roles, or false consensus are means that lead to acceptance of the *status quo*.

Finally, regarding the four relational forms of power, one can assume that the community power structure could either reinforce the power *of* some individuals and social players *over* others, inhibiting their participation and practices that are more democratic, or enable the development of the political power *of* more residents to participate and to contribute to the public good and solutions for issues that are of the interest of all. In this second case, processes of social participation and cooperation could at the same time strengthen and be enriched by the power of citizens collaborating *with* others, deepening democracy and increasing the effectiveness of community action in promoting positive change. According to Brennan & Israel (2009), the exercise of power could also affect community agency by being used to facilitate and to suppress social interaction.

C. Empowerment

In general, the concept of empowerment refers to the increased autonomy and self-determination of individuals and communities in representing their interests and their capacity to take control of the circumstances, exercise power, and achieve their own goals (Rappaport, 1984;

Adams, 2008; Luttrell et al., 2009; Zimmerman, 2000). Empowerment is also conceptualized as a process by which individuals or their collective “are able to help themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives” (Adams, 2008, p.xvi) and to gain mastery over their lives (Rappaport, 1984). SDC (2004) also defines empowerment as an emancipation process in which the disadvantaged are enabled to exercise their rights, to access resources, and to participate actively in the process of shaping society and decision-making.

Zimmerman (2000) provides a theory of empowerment, which includes processes and outcomes. The author suggests that actions, activities, or structures may *be empowering* and that they result in a level of *being empowered*. Moreover, he points out that empowerment is context and population-specific, taking “different forms for different people in different contexts” (p.45). The author suggests a framework to characterize (empowering) processes and (empowered) outcomes in three levels of analysis: individual, organizational, and community.

At the individual level, empowerment is gained through participating and working with others to achieve goals, implementing efforts to gain access and managing resources, developing a sense of control, learning decision-making skills, and building some critical awareness or understanding of the sociopolitical environment. At the organizational level, empowerment may include processes and structures that enhance member participation in decision-making, shared responsibilities, and leadership, resulting in improved organizational effectiveness for goal achievement, networking with other organizations, and influence in policy. At the community level, empowerment may refer to collective action to improve the quality of life in a location and to the connections among community organizations, and community agency. It also includes enhancement of pluralistic leadership and residents’ participatory skills, access to resources, an open structure of governance, and tolerance for diversity.

In those perspectives, social participation and community action could be seen both as empowering processes and as outcomes of the individual and collective empowerment of citizens. Brennan & Israel (2009) suggest that community agency and collective action can be generators of local power when the ability to mobilize a broad range of interests is important to meet collective needs and equitable resource utilization. Also, according to Rowlands (1997), collective action, social mobilization, and alliance building increase *power with*. Piron and Watkins (2004) suggest that the political empowerment - or the capacity to analyze, organize, and mobilize – is what leads to collective action.

Being and feeling empowered are mechanisms that can lead to participation (Zimmerman (2000). The study of Galambos & Hughes (2000) about community activism and leadership development among women in the US demonstrated that getting involved in community activism made them feel powerful and willing to engage. They felt empowered when they were admired and respected, in positions where they experienced the sensation of an “expert power,” which was reflected in having the knowledge, being held responsible, and being able to provide advice. Rowlands (1997) also stresses that increasing the *power within* is core in the processes of empowerment and participation, rising self-confidence and self-esteem, a sense of agency, a sense of “self,” and a sense of being worthy.

In the context of SMEP, one can assume that the very activism of social mobilizers in gathering others and organizing a collective action is a process that may empower themselves, others that get engaged, and their community. The empowerment perspective suggests the experience of working with others to enhance their power may be a factor that fosters participation. Besides, some authors suggest that seeing positive results from their engagement in transformative action also creates the realization of their power to contribute, developing their

sense of agency (Freire, 1970; Toro & Werneck, 1996) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), which, in turn, can boost their engagement.

At the individual level, recovering or gaining power through empowering actions, activities, or structures, can result in changes of limiting perceptions and attitude, development of skills and capabilities, courage to challenge restraining structures and relations, enhancing their *power within* and their *power to* engage in the betterment of one's own life and of their localities.

At the collective level, empowerment results from and in the increase of the power *with*, enhancing their community adaptive capacity, agency, and resilience. According to Brennan & Israel (2009), the power accumulated by citizen mobilization provides “the ability of local groups to liaise with power-holding elites” (Brennan & Israel, 2009, p. 82). Therefore, community power or empowerment can also be understood as the ability or process by which local action copes to exist and not to be eradicated, dismissed, or exploited by local power elites (Brennan & Israel, 2009). Finally, according to the Kettering Foundation (2015), the individual and collective empowerment are core in the development of democracy, which is defined as:

a system of governance in which power comes from citizens who generate their power by working together to combat common problems – beginning in their communities – and by working to shape their shared future, both through what they do with other citizens and through their institutions.

In sum, in this chapter, I presented SMEP, its strategies, and critiques and situated the program inside the experiences of participatory democracy in Brazil, also by comparing it to other innovations, or ‘invited spaces’ (Gaventa, 2006), institutionalized by the federal government. I also explored some studies of those participatory experiences in Brazil and other research on community and local engagement for insights in developing a conceptual framework

to identify factors affecting the activism of the social mobilizers. In the next chapter, I will consolidate the development of my conceptual and theoretical frameworks that will guide my investigation. I will explore the conceptual and methodological approach of social mobilization that inspired SMEP (Toro and Werneck, 1996) and other theoretical propositions. Finally, I will also present the four research questions that frame this study.

CHAPTER III - Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Uma consciência aprofundada de sua situação leva as pessoas a apreendê-la como uma realidade histórica suscetível de transformação.

[A deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation.]

Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and philosopher, leading advocate of critical pedagogy

It is known that the leadership activism for SMEP is challenging and variable amongst communities and might have been affected positively or negatively by several factors. Those factors could be multiple, interconnected, and multidimensional, characterizing a social complexity (Dryzek, 2005). In the previous chapter, then, I explored research literature to help guiding the investigation in this study. I presented SMEP and reviewed propositions and findings of several authors regarding innovations for social participation implemented in Brazil. I also explored research in community, social engagement, leadership, power and empowerment to get insights of factors affecting engagement at the local level. In this chapter, then, I present the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that will ground this study, which were inspired by the insights from the literature and my previous experience.

To fulfill the purpose of identifying factors that facilitated or hindered the engagement of social mobilizers in carrying out SMEP activities in their communities, I decided to ground my study on four theoretical perspectives. Those perspectives add or complement each other in understanding that engagement not only depends on motivations, but also on individual and collective capabilities. They also reveal that cultural, contextual, and situational aspects matter for social participation and leadership activism.

First, I will explore some assumptions from the standpoint of the social mobilization approach developed by Toro and Werneck (1996) that inspired BMEC's strategy. Then, I

examine other theoretical perspectives that illuminate complex community level relationships and dynamics that may take place in the context of SMEP implementation. Those include perspectives of the interactional theory of community, enlightened by propositions related to participatory democracy, and empowerment and power dimensions.

In sum, the conceptual and methodological approach of social mobilization that inspired SMEP (Toro and Werneck, 1996) suggest that the engagement of individuals should be nurtured through leadership development, communication, motivation, and positive collective sentiments. However, it overlooks politics and power issues. The interactional theory, in turn, sees community as a social field composed by interactions of individuals who live in a same locality and that care about this locality. In this way, social interaction is central to create motivations and capabilities for individual engagement, community action and development. Also, perspectives of participatory democracy defend the creation of opportunities of reconnecting citizens to the public life. Citizens should deliberate about shared issues and implement solutions, as co-creators of the public good, which would empower individuals and communities. Moreover, other theories state that power is unevenly distributed in a society and influence social participation. Power dimensions and structures can define who participates and who doesn't, enabling or preventing collaboration and engagement.

Finally, I will also discuss some aspects regarding how the strategies chosen for the local implementation of SMEP might influence engagement. At the end of this chapter, inspired by the literature, the discussion of those theories, and my experiences with SMEP and selected cases – including a pilot study, I will present the conceptual framework and the research questions that will guide my analysis.

1. Toro & Werneck's theoretical and methodological proposition that inspired SMEP

As I mentioned in the the previous chapter, BMEC received theoretical and methodological inspiration to create SMEP from the approach of social mobilization developed by Toro and Werneck (1996). Thus, examining remarks and strategies suggested by the selected authors can provide insights regarding factors that may affect the leadership activism of social mobilizers, especially those related to choices used in the local implementation of SMEP.

Toro & Werneck's (1996) theoretical and methodological approach is compiled in the book *Mobilização Social: Um Modo de Construir a Democracia e a Participação* [*Social Mobilization: a Way of Building Democracy and Participation*]. Their proposal consists of an orchestrated social mobilization, composed by for four dimensions (the imagery, the playing field, collectivization, and monitoring) that should be constructed and operated simultaneously. As presented in chapter II, the authors aim to strengthen democracy by creating a mechanism to inspire, organize, and empower individuals for engaging actively in their communities for provoking positive change.

Their theoretical propositions are aligned with several ideas of participatory democracy but, at the same time, fall into contradiction when turned into practical suggestions by the authors, especially by overseeing issues related to power. For instance, the initial contradiction comes into play when the authors propose a procedural and persuasive social mobilization, while constantly emphasizing the importance of the free will of individuals for their engagement and their empowerment through the development of their agency. Their proposal also strongly emphasizes the process (strategies, communication, dimensions) and the impact of leaders in conducting it and in engaging others.

By analyzing their work, several aspects could be identified that might influence the engagement of individuals in a mobilization approach such as SMEP's, positively or negatively, according to the assumptions of the authors. The participation should be voluntary and free, but could (or should) also be influenced by leaders, others, and the process of collective action. Thus, citizens' attitudes, feelings, and beliefs are paramount in motivating and influencing their decision-making regarding participating, according to the authors. However, relational aspects inside the group or the implementation process may also interfere in the way people feel and make sense of things, as well as present empowering or discouraging issues for participation. The authors also mention Brazilian cultural challenges to civic engagement that need to be addressed. Finally, they stress issues of inefficient strategies and flaws in the mobilization process developed locally.

Regarding individuals' sentiments, beliefs, and attitude, the authors pointed out some driving aspects such as the citizen's passion, will to act, and disposition to move from an individual perspective to a collective one. Those could be ignited and nurtured, including along with the collective organization. Also, fatalism and hopelessness might be two barriers to be broken. Moreover, an individual's belief in change and hope that things will get better are presented by the authors as crucial for one's activism.

In this sense, the authors stressed the need for developing a *strong imagery* (which should summarize the common purpose) in the collective action to motivate engagement. The strength of the imagery is related to its attractiveness, its social relevance, people's interest in the cause or goal to be achieved, and the extent it reflects a collective consensus. Leaders (which, in the case of SMEP could be those who created the proposal – BMEC, the facilitators of the local implementation – Gaia Social, or those who carried out the local actions – social mobilizers)

should, then, create appealing imagery that would lead people to engage. A contradiction here is that at the same time the authors advocate people should be free to participate and have autonomy in their actions. It is clear their belief that the leaders of the movement can persuade people's participation, especially by making powerful and strategic use of communication and information and by orchestrating the collective action.

Moreover, the authors highlight the importance of the sense of agency of the individuals for their engagement. Being accountable for change, by feeling themselves as responsible and able to instigate and to build change in their communities, is an important aspect of activism. That also includes a sense of self-efficacy, when people feel able to provoke positive change. Also, according to Toro & Werneck, being confident that they have autonomy to act should make people feel empowered towards reaching the goals or the common purpose. From the authors' perspective, leaders should empower citizens by making people sense that they have agency and they are part of a collective, and by increasing their self-efficacy. People's self-efficacy, in turn, seems to be undermined if the activities do not fit their ability to commit and if they have difficulty in identifying ways or alternatives of how to contribute in their routines.

Although Toro and Werneck talk about empowerment, Gohn (2008) criticizes them, alleging that the political dimension was forgotten or denied in their propositions. She claims that the voluntarism of the collective action that is central in their approach prevents identification of groups of interests, conflicts, and power struggles. In this way, there is no consideration of the interests of class and social groups, but only public interest that should bring citizens together in a collective action. Thus, this social mobilization approach seems to ignore the community power structure or to assume a pluralist view of it for the implementation of collective action, as I will discuss later on.

Without digging deeper, Toro and Werneck alluded to a few, isolated power issues that could affect participation, among the relational aspects of the organization of the collective action. For the authors, the movement must guarantee the collective space to encourage participation and avoid some issues. For instance, some participants may try to dominate the group or to become “the owner” of the movement, with more authority than others. Such an individual could restrict the autonomy of others or take advantage to gain power or benefits, so they must be put aside or be excluded from the group to safeguard the collective space. Also, the establishment of hierarchies among the participants should be avoided, and the participation of all should be valued as equally important. In their ideal, everybody owns the movement with no distinction of power or hierarchy.

At this point, I must criticize the authors in not being consistent with what they propose. In lacking a broader consideration of power dimension, they also ignore the sense of how main leaders (such as BMEC) are exercising their (*invisible*) power *over* others by creating the imagery and all messaging to be conveyed, and by making use of communication to guide people’s actions. Thus, the discourse that all own the movement with no distinction of power or hierarchy appears to be fallacious from the beginning.

On the other hand, the authors urge participants to invite more people to amplify the debate and the alternatives for action, guaranteeing plurality and comprehensiveness. Also, knowing that others are also making efforts for the same purposes in other places should enhance motivation for involvement. Feeling acknowledged, valued and respected, as well as trusted regarding one’s capacity of contributing towards the common purpose are other enabling aspects for participation mentioned by the authors. The local knowledge and all kinds of contribution must be encouraged, and local leaders (social mobilizers) should be prepared to interpret the

information and the reality and to adapt messages according to participants' realities in their field of actuation. The absence of those may discourage engagement.

Moreover, Toro, and Werneck also unveil cultural barriers that may hinder civil participation. First, their interpretation of the Brazilian society is that people got used to evil, which has led them to conformism and an absence of indignation that does not prompt them to take action or engage. The other two barriers, in my interpretation, are intrinsically related to the idea of the government as producer and the citizens as consumers, which is contrary to the democratic notion of citizens as co-creators of the social order and the "public", as advocated by the authors and by Boyte (2004) and Fischer (2000).

One is a Latin America historical-cultural barrier of people understanding "public" as property of the government instead of property of all society (or "what benefits and interests all"). Citizens, then, must break that barrier and commit to a new attitude of accountability, developing the capacity to think and to act collectively, by also respecting differences.

The other barrier is presented as a Brazilian colonial tradition of "people getting used to not analyzing, to not evaluating their positions and to not deciding, but to adhere to others' positions, usually of those in power" (Toro & Werneck, 1996, p. 23). They suggest that to shift from a culture of adherence to a culture of deliberation, it is essential for people to recognize their capacity for decision-making and action, which will make them feel more confident and willing to engage by themselves. Once more, the authors advocate for the empowerment of citizens to act as co-creators of governance by developing their critical abilities and autonomy, while in the methodology they propose, the engagement is engineered by the leaders by convincing people through communication.

Finally, Toro and Werneck consider the choices made in the process of implementing

social mobilization as key for impacting the participation of citizens. Those factors include the local leadership organization and performance, strategies and flaws in the application of the method, and the maintenance of the activities or the social movement by the local actors, rather than ineffectiveness of the methodological framework they propose. Such aspects also relate to managing the individual, relational, and cultural issues presented in the way of encouraging engagement and minimizing barriers for involvement.

In this way, the authors emphasize some aspects related to the efficiency of leadership in motivating others to participate. The first one is the creation of a robust social imagery, which must be shared collectively. Likewise, they mention the leaders' failure in arousing passion or inciting engagement, and in making people believe that they can contribute and provoke change. Moreover, the leaders must maintain the atmosphere of respect of differences and the equal importance of everybody's participation, as well as spread the feeling of collectivisation and ensure the ownership of the movement for all. Also, the cultural barriers to citizens' participation should be addressed with the support of leaders.

Other aspects relate to the methodology in promoting participation. They stress the importance of providing information to guide the participants. In this perspective, involvement will be absent or lost if the participants lack reference and clear information about the goals, the current situation and needs to be addressed, and the priorities of mobilization. Accordingly, another risk to activism would be not providing a plan of action to the participants, which is important to inform them about how they can contribute to the cause and collective efforts, including in their routines. At this point, another critical and contradictory point that I see in such practices, is the lack of deliberation or problematization of the local problems and needs by the community. Instead, ideas, information, and solutions are provided to them, which goes against

democratizing and empowering practices.

Moving forward, other aspects stressed by the authors relate to communication. Having information or awareness that others are committed, in other places, to developing actions with the same objectives are essential to keep people motivated. In the same way, sharing the positive results that are achieved along the way is essential to maintain enthusiasm and to inspire others to engage. The latter is also argued by Freire (1970) for the development of agency.

Finally, the authors advocate that the success of the collective movement depends on operating the four dimensions of the social mobilization they propose (*the imagery, the playing field, collectivization, and monitoring*) simultaneously. They argue that offering only the imagery with no actions would generate anguish. Oppositely, developing actions and decisions with no imagery would generate only temporary activism. Another essential idea stated by the authors is that participation will not last if the movement is confused with sporadic events and campaigns, not generating actions that directly seek to achieve the objectives or purpose. People should develop actions in their routines and fields of actuation. Finally, not monitoring indicators or seeing positive results and the loss of the movement's purpose could make people lose interest.

2. Analyzing SMEP through other theoretical standpoints

Other theoretical perspectives are also important to provide additional insights of factors influencing engagement, especially concerning complex community level dynamics, structures, and relations that might be present in the settings where SMEP was implemented. Based on SMEP's aims, discourse, and strategies, I found the lenses of participatory democracy and sociological theories that study communities and local dynamics (such as the interactional approach and others involving power dimensions and structures) appropriate to situate and analyze SMEP. Such theoretical and conceptual approaches either corroborate, add, or

complement each other. They also indicate that engagement not only depends on motivations, but also on individual and collective capabilities, and can be highly influenced by cultural, contextual, and structural aspects. Therefore, they seem to create a comprehensive framework for analyzing the complexity of factors affecting the local leadership engagement for SMEP.

At first glance, SMEP seems to breathe democracy. SMEP is a policy whose precepts are grounded in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, which declared education as a right of all Brazilians and an important social value for the development of the country. Moreover, it affirms social participation as the sole avenue in promoting education. Also, both the Union and families should be accountable for education, along with societal collaboration (Brazil, 1988).

Based on that, through its discourse, SMEP reinforced education as both a right and a responsibility of all, and disseminated the idea that the betterment of public education could only be possible if all of society participated, incorporating education as a social value (Brazil, 2008). Paradoxically, however, SMEP is a top-down policy, created by the federal government with no direct participation of society. Even so, SMEP seeks to foster civic engagement and collaboration among social actors and, consequently, the empowerment and the accountability of citizens in promoting the public good, beyond government services. There are also critiques to its methodological and political foundations, as discussed previously.

Regardless of criticism of the policies and approaches that inspired SMEP, the program suggests that a good public education is promoted and co-created by citizens in their communities. Professionals and ordinary people should engage actively and collaboratively in a hands-on approach for improving the common good, strengthening the family-school-community relationship. People should contribute to better public education in their routines, by participating in school life, supporting the student at home, and keeping up and working in collaboration with

schools (Brazil, 2008). The program also urged different segments of society to collaborate by spreading information, and engaging people in their professions and other organizations. Such precepts resonate with the principles of participatory democracy (Fisher, 2000; Sen, 2001; Boyte, 2004; Mathews, 2009, 2013; Kettering Foundation, 2015), in which citizens develop their agency and generate their power by engaging and working together for the common good in their communities and their routines. The community is also strengthened in those processes.

Also, the operational strategy of SMEP takes place at the community level and seeks to promote social participation (or civic engagement) on several levels. The engagement starts by community leaders, who are trained and emboldened to mobilize others. Such leaders, then, are expected to foster individual and collective participation in their communities, by disseminating information and creating opportunities where residents can interact and collaborate to solve issues and to craft actions for the betterment of local public education. Social participation, thus, achieves another level, involving the collective engagement of residents, and different social actors and institutions, moving towards a community action.

A framework that can connect such pieces is the interactional theory of community and community development (Wilkinson, 1991, 1999; Theodori, 2005; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Brennan & Lullof, 2007; Flint, 2010; Brennan, 2013; Brennan et al, 2013; Bridger et al, 2013; Korshing & Davidson, 2013; Olson & Brennan, 2018). Such a theory can also be combined with, and complemented by, participatory democracy propositions. Community, from an interactional perspective, encompasses a network of sustained social interactions of individuals of a common geographic area that share a collective interest in the welfare of the locality. Social interactions are seen as central to the emergence of the community and collective efforts for ensuring the common good. From this perspective, community development, represents purposive efforts to

strengthen this generalizing network of social interactions, which, in turn, represents the capacity of residents to work together for their own well-being.

Such a theory gives foundation to several community dynamics and situates important concepts related to community capacity and development. It states how social interactions and engagement are important for building the community field and community capacity for promoting positive change. It situates how such processes are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Community action is seen as central to addressing local issues and enhancing the collective welfare. Also, community leadership is recognized as an important piece for nurturing all of those processes.

The interactional theory of community provides, then, a standpoint for conceptualizing and analyzing the strategy proposed by SMEP at the community level. From such a standpoint, SMEP could be considered as a mechanism to develop community leadership for enhancing individual and collective agency and fostering community action. Moreover, SMEP could potentially contribute to the development *in* and *of* the community, and to enhance community capacity, as will be explained in the next section.

However, the communities are not only ruled by positive sentiments, but also by relations involving power, politics, and conflicts, which need to be considered and integrated into this study's theoretical framework. Societies at all levels are characterized by an uneven distribution of power and are permeated by power relations and disputes. Such a phenomenon affects both democratic practices and community dynamics and warrants further investigation. Gaventa (2006), supplies a framework to assess the possibilities of transformative action in various political spaces by elucidating the existence of three forms or dimensions of power (invisible, hidden, and visible) that can influence the participation in public decision-making, the public

agenda, ideologies, and agency of determined individuals in relation to others.

Power dimensions are also disguised in the local power structure, which ultimately results in who rules the community. The local power structure also promotes those individuals who can support or hinder community development efforts. Power in the community can be leveled-out and shared, as in a pluralist approach, or more concentrated in the hands of specific players.

Furthermore, other authors (Freire, 1970; Sen, 2001; Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004) provide pathways to increase the power of individuals, communities, and the civil society through critical and active social engagement and collaboration of citizens. Those ways also lead to enhanced individual and community agency and empowerment.

In this way, these theoretical and conceptual propositions bring new perspectives to the assumptions of the social mobilization approach proposed by Toro and Werneck (1996). In the following sections, I discuss them in more detail.

3. The Interactional Theory of Community

From the interactional perspective, community is defined as sustained and regular interactions between individuals who share a common geographic area with interest in the well-being of the locality (Korsching & Davidson, 2013; Brennan et al, 2013a). A locality is composed of several distinct social fields or groups that differ by membership and interest, whose members act to achieve particular goals of concern (Wilkinson, 1991, 1999; Bridger & Alter, 2006b; Brennan, 2008; Brennan et al, 2013a; Bridger et al, 2013). The mechanism of connecting these self-interest fields to form a local society is the “community field,” which functions to bring together and to coordinate individual groups into purposive community-wide efforts to address common needs (Wilkinson, 1991, 1999; Theodori, 2005; Bridger & Alter, 2006b; Brennan, 2008; Flint, 2010; Brennan et al, 2013). The community field, that is “the

network of social interactions that contains and integrates various community interests in a local society” (Wilkinson, 1991; p. 81), emerges over time when such interactions become structured, usually by processes in which people identify with the locality, share interests in its welfare, and develop ties with whom they interact (Wilkinson, 1991; Korsching & Davidson, 2013; Brennan et al, 2013a, 2013b; Bridger et al, 2013).

From the interactional perspective, community is seen as an environment that constantly changes and that is permeated by community action and social interaction (Brennan, 2013). The emergence of community is a dynamic process of bringing people together. Community development occurs where there are purposive efforts to create and strengthen the community field. This generalizing network of social interactions, then, represents the capacity of residents to work together for their well-being (Wilkinson, 1991, 1999; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Bridger & Alter, 2006a, 2006b; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Brennan, 2008; Korsching & Davidson, 2013).

In the interactional perspective, the concepts of social participation (or civic engagement), community action, community agency and capacity, and community leadership represent contributions to processes that lead to the emergence of community and to efforts of community development and, at the same time, are also reinforced by them. Social participation, or civic engagement, can be broadly understood as the active participation of citizens in issues of public concern to promote the public good. The concept of civic engagement comprises a diversity of shapes and perspectives regarding relationships involving the individual, the community, and the larger society (Dolan & Brennan, 2016). In the community, the participation of residents can also take several forms. It primarily encompasses engagement at the individual level, which in turn, makes possible collective actions.

Civic engagement at the community level is an important practice for fostering individual

and community agency. Through social participation, besides contributing to the public good, individuals have the opportunity to interact with others, share and enact concerns, learn and build knowledge with others, develop important interpersonal, analytical, and political skills, establish networks and new social ties, entail trust and norms of reciprocity, among others. Such opportunities can also foster the emergence of community leaders and the preparation of residents for this role. Moreover, research shows that in communities characterized by dense networks of civic engagement, people are better able to work together for the common good. In this way, Luloff & Bridger (2003) suggest that civic engagement and social interaction entail a mutual obligation and responsibility for action.

When residents cooperate to pursue common goals based on shared values, the situation transcends a simple accumulation of their individual actions and emerges as a community action (Luloff and Swanson, 1995; Brennan et al, 2013a). Community action can be defined, then, by “people within a common locality working together on common interests to achieve common goals related to the welfare and the betterment of the community” (Korsching & Davidson, 2013, p.49). In the case of SMEP, its strategy can be understood as an attempt to mobilize residents towards a community action for the betterment of local education. Community action, in turn, reflects, reinforces, and is strengthened by individual engagement and community agency. Community agency can be broadly defined as the ability of the community to act (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Bridger, J. C., & Alter, 2006a; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Korsching & Davidson, 2013). It is echoed in the capacity of residents to use, manage, and enhance those resources and assets available to them when addressing local issues (Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Olson and Brenna, 2018). This collective capability reflects not only the motivations of residents to act but also, and very importantly, their capability to do so

(Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff and Swanson, 1995; Brennan et al, 2013a, Brennan et al, 2013b; Bridger et al, 2013). Such collective capability also distinguishes community from other groups or people who simply occupy a common territory (Luloff & Bridger, 2003).

Community agency is said to exist “where local relationships increase the adaptive capacity of people to address local problems” (Brennan & Luloff, 2007, p.5). It is not a static capacity, but an interactional process (Bridger & Alter, 2006b; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Brennan, 2008; Flint, 2010; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2016). When residents interact over concerns important to the whole collective, this capacity for local action and resilience emerges (Brennan, 2008). Therefore, community agency is a key concept found in the process of creation and maintenance of links and channels of interaction among local social fields (Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Flint, 2010, Olson & Brennan, 2018), that is, in the establishment of the community field. Community agency is also reflected and fostered in the occurrence of community action. At the same time it enables collective action to take place. Central to this concept is the recognition that every community has the potential for collective action, as long as people interact and care about each other and the place they live (Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Brennan, 2013; Bridger et al, 2013). Therefore, it empowers individuals and community as agents of change.

From the interactional perspective, then, community action creates and is created through social interaction. Social interactions give direction to processes of collective action (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). Through the creation and maintenance of channels of interaction and communication, people begin to mutually understand common interests, needs, and concerns and make decisions and commitments in how to address them (Brennan, 2008). In this way, community agency and community action depend on interaction and communication (Wilkinson,

1991; Luloff and Swanson, 1995; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Bridger et al, 2013; Olson & Brennan, 2018).

The community also depends on interaction. According to Bridger & Alter (2006b), community has social interaction as its main and persistent feature. The importance of social interaction to the establishment and maintenance of the community field is illustrated by Wilkinson (1991): “social interaction delineates a territory as the community locale; it provides the associations that comprise the local society; it gives structure and direction to process of collective action, and it is the source of community” (p.13).

The interactional theory postulates the idea that local capacity to address important issues and to improve local well-being depends upon the strength of the community field (Luloff & Bridger, 2003). From this perspective, community development involves purposive efforts to create and strengthen the community field (Wilkinson, 1991, 1999; Flint 2010; Olson & Brennan, 2018). Luloff & Bridger (2003) define community development as “the process of building relationships that increase the adaptive capacity of people who share a common territory” (p. 211). The development of the community field both influences, and is influenced by, social participation and action. They are mutually reinforcing.

Leadership plays a key role in community processes. Community interaction does not guarantee motivators for civic engagement or people coming together to improve their local society and its well-being (Brennan, 2008). There are several factors that may affect participation, which is often challenging (Fischer, 2000). Thus, collective citizen participation has to be organized, facilitated, and even nurtured, because it is not something that can simply happen (Fischer, 2000). Community leadership can be an important factor in encouraging motivation and nurturing participation, and developing that existing leadership became a big part

of SMEP.

Furthermore, more than motivation for action, people also need the ability to do so (Brennan, 2008), and community leadership is both a builder and an expression of community capacity. In the interactional perspective, community capacity is understood as two main interrelated aspects, which are associated with problem-solving and resiliency in the community: the existence of resources and the way the local society manages and secures them (Mataritta et al., 2016). Community capacity embraces several aspects, including those structural, interactional, social, and psychological, which involves a great range from knowledge and skills, to aptitudes, attitudes, actions, organizations, partnerships, and resources of different nature (Goodman et al., 1998; Mataritta et al., 2016).

Community leadership can support building community capacity by fostering the development of the community field, inspiring and influencing individual and collective engagement, facilitating and organizing community action, and working purposefully to enhance community agency, for instance. Therefore, community leadership, as a role and as an interactional process, entails a form of civic engagement that aims directly at enhancing community capacity and resiliency. Community leaders play important roles as motivators, facilitators, supporters, and community organizers. SMEP, through its strategy of local leadership development for fostering collective engagement, would also have the potential to contribute towards community capacity building.

From the interactional perspective, community leadership primarily “involves, as its essential feature, an orientation of an actor to the process of building the structure of the community field” (Wilkinson, 1999, p.89). However, there is another important dimension that is the development *in* the community, to which community leadership is important to support

(Kaufman, 1959; Summers, 1986; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Korsching & Davidson, 2013).

Community leadership could, then, foster both the generalizing structure of community that cuts across its social fields (development *of* the community) and the accomplishment of goals and tasks related to enhancing local infrastructure and social well-being (development *in* the community). Both processes are mutually reinforcing and important for keeping people motivated to engaged and for strengthening and maintaining the community field and, consequently, for enhancing the local capacity for problem-solving and the betterment of the local welfare (Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Korsching & Davidson, 2013). According to Korsching & Davidson (2013, p.44),

Ultimately, the role of the generalizing structure (development of the community) is to help the community achieve its goals, and task accomplishment (development in the community), in turn, results in feelings of achievement and reinforces the community to decisions and actions devoted to structure building.

Therefore, community leadership can support community development in its two dimensions. First, community leaders can help bring people together, by creating opportunities and channels for interaction and communication, through which people will discover common interests and concerns and make decisions and commitments in how to address them. Second, by organizing the community, community leaders can support residents in the process of community action by creating a shared vision and by facilitating and supporting, people to achieve it. Also, they can manage the propensity for individual efforts to be self-centered and fragmented, instead of being coordinated and focused on community-building(Wilkinson, 1999).

In the context of SMEP, one may say that its main strategy of community leadership development for collective engagement could potentially foster the development *in* the

community as an end, and the development *of* the community as a means to achieve the goal of better-quality education. Since SMEP's primary goal is to nurture a collective action for improving the quality of local education, the program is proposing efforts towards the development *in* the community, by enhancing its local assets and well-being. At the same time, SMEP advocates that better public education would be achieved by strengthening the community-school-relationship. Social mobilizers should gather and foster social interaction among different players in dialogue concerning local education, and to stimulate collaborative action to improve the situation (Brazil, 2008). To facilitate collective action, the social mobilizers would actively involve the formation of more "weak ties" (Summers, 1986; Granovetter, 1973), building bridges between people of different social fields, interests, and background. Such efforts can characterize the development *of* the community, where the mobilizers are executing purposive activities to strengthen the community field.

4. Factors affecting engagement in the SMEP context

4.1. Interactional Theory of Community

The interactional theory provides an interesting standpoint for analyzing the individual and collective engagement of social mobilizers and community residents in the context of SMEP. The notion of community agency enlightens the fact that residents, since they concern about their localities and interact, have the power to work together and enact change collectively, being capable of enhancing their well-being and transform society (Luloff and Swanson, 1995; Bridger et al., 2013; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2016; Olson & Brennan, 2018). From the interactional perspective, interaction is the main mechanism that creates a framework, motivations, and social connections necessary for social participation and collective action (Wilkinson, 1991; Brennan,

2008). Through sustained interaction, individuals identify with the locality, discover common concerns and problems, and establish goals and means to address them.

In the case of SMEP, a collective concern about the quality of local public education would have been an important motivator for engagement, and SMEP activities and events could have fostered opportunities for social interaction, connections, and engagement in collective action. The activism of local leaders (social mobilizers) was important to implement and activate such processes in their communities.

The perspective of interactional theory illuminates several factors that may foster individual and collective engagement for the betterment of the locality, which in this study is gathered under the umbrella of the broader concept of community capacity (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2016). Those factors include social interaction, sense of collective and community, positive ties, concern about public issues and others, local leadership, community organization and agency, and engagement and support of other community members. One can also assume that the absence or blockage of those may also lower or compromise social engagement and collective action in a locality. At the same time, sustained social participation could also create an opportunity for the development of the enhancement of such factors.

However, there are some gaps in the interactional theory regarding social engagement at the community level that could benefit from other theoretical and conceptual frameworks. In the literature, it is acknowledged that community interaction does not guarantee motivators and capabilities for civic engagement, or for people coming together to improve their local society and its well-being (Bridger & Alter, 2006; Brennan, 2008; Olson & Brennan, 2018). Individual and community agency involve various dimensions and are also affected by cultural, social and economic conditions and structures, and socio-political contexts (Freire, 1970; Gaventa, 1988;

Brennan & Lullof, 2007; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2016). Several other factors may affect individual and collective participation, including cultural aspects and individual's beliefs, interests, and capabilities, among others. Also, there are different motivators and challenges in the dynamics, culture, organization, and governance of each locality that influence the residents' participation and the development of community action.

In the next sections, I will also explore propositions related to participatory democracy, empowerment, and power relations and local politics to illuminate and integrate some of those aspects. Moreover, the structure and the specific strategy used in the implementation of SMEP in each community might have played another important role in their engagement as leaders of community action, and so might have their sociodemographic characteristics.

4.2. Participatory Democracy and Empowerment

Conceptual and practical propositions related to participatory democracy and individual and collective empowerment can corroborate or add to the perspective of the interactional theory regarding social engagement at the community level in several ways. Common to both perspectives - of interactional community and of participatory democracy – is of civic engagement and collective action as crucial endeavors for enhancing the collective well-being or solving public problems. Another common point is that, in participatory democracy, shared interests and concerns of public benefit also are great motivators for individual and collective engagement and efforts. In the participatory democratic perspective, the active and cooperative engagement (and work) of citizens in issues of public concern to promote the public good, through shared responsibility, is seen as the core value of democracy (Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004; Mathews, 2009). There is the idea of an “organic” (Mathews, 2009, 2013) or “everyday” politics (Boyte, 2004), which reinforces the role of ordinary citizens in public life in

environments beyond the formal political system. Public work is done in the routines, professions, and communities by citizens, who become agents of change and co-creators of democracy, instead of being mere clients or recipients of the government (Boyte, 2004).

Such perspectives reinforce how empowering active engagement is for individuals and communities with a hands-on approach of producing the public good and shaping their future (Freire, 1970; Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004; Mathews, 2013; Kettering Foundation, 2015). By joining forces to solve common problems, citizens can generate the power to rule themselves (Mathews, 2013). Through social participation and collaboration, they can develop individual and collective agency, especially when democratic interactions and practices are maximized in the community (Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2016).

One central point in participatory democracy propositions is that for the development of public work, of collective benefit, people and social groups have to learn to negotiate interests and overcome differences (Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004). Moreover, in such community-rooted politics, the collective effort must also go beyond ideological or partisan issues, towards embracing values of participation, community, and plurality (Boyte, 2004). This is an important addition to the interactional theory, because it acknowledges that despite the development of social interactions, motivations, and organization for engaging in a collective action for the common good, such an endeavor is not easy to initiate and sustain, and requires effort to get through challenges, starting with the diversity of viewpoints, interests, power, and local partisan politics. The naïve idea that shared concerns and the willingness to see issues and make changes in a community will guarantee collaboration falls apart, as one recognizes that the setting of any society in which social participation takes place comprises a complex and dynamic system of

interactions, interests, needs, frames, power, politics, and oppression (Freire, 1970; Lewicki et al, 2001; Boyte, 2004; Mathews, 2009). Cultural barriers might also exist, and the structure of power and decision making in the community may facilitate or hinder the participation of citizens or specific groups.

Accordingly, Brennan (2008) and Bridger & Alter (2006) recognize that social interaction does not imply an unrealistic view of society on which it is based mainly on positive sentiments. A local society is comprised of conflictual and harmonious interactions and relationships (Bridger & Alter, 2006), which may be rooted in several factors. Social interaction does not necessarily enable collaboration and collective action, but rather may hinder them. Conflictual relations and situations arise all the time in any social setting, and may also represent challenges for social engagement, cooperation, or the solution of common problems in a locality (Lewicki et al., 2002). The sources and causes of conflict in a local society can be multiple, including differences in personalities, mental models, interests, needs, priorities, socioeconomic conditions, and political and power disputes.

One source of conflict among individuals and divisions in the community may be the diversity of viewpoints, understandings, and interpretations, which influences interactions, relationships, and collaboration. According to Fairhurst & Sarr (1996), engagement and collaboration of citizens will depend on their mental model and the way they interpret or make sense of things and others. Such aspects can be gathered under the concept of “frame,” which represent “our interpretation of what is going on and how we see ourselves and others implicated in what is happening” (Lewicki et al., 2002, p.12). Through the process of framing, one takes a stance on an issue (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996; Lewicki et al., 2002), which involves making interpretations about what the issue is and attributions regarding how and why it is occurring,

who is responsible, motivations of the parties involved and how - and by whom - it should be addressed or solved. Such a stance can encourage one's engagement in collective action toward achieving a common purpose, such as SMEP. Also, frames can take several shapes, which may be similar or different, accordant or conflicting amongst a group, which has good chances to impact interactions and collaboration in this process either positively or negatively.

Individuals in a community may hold both self- and collective-interests (Brennan, 2008). Decision making, political judgement, and citizenship are not always carried with a generalized public good in mind (Boyte, 2004). Self-interest is a source of motivation and passion for participation (Boyte, 2004), but may also influence in directing action towards self-driven benefits at the expense of the collective good (Toro & Werneck, 1996). Such leaning can be carried out by both citizens and community leaders (either positional or emergent). Moreover, local politics can be a cradle where self-interests are used to manipulate others and the political and institutional structures that should provide the common welfare towards the benefit of a few (Summers, 2003), involving power games, alliances, and corruption. Local politics usually are closely connected to the structure and the distribution of power in a community, which can affect directly the engagement of citizens, by encouraging, preventing, or selecting their participation, as will be discussed in the next section.

Thus, according to the propositions of participatory democracy, the engagement and collaborative public work of citizens must be constructed carefully, and challenges met, to be successful (Boyte, 2004). Such challenges represent factors that may discourage or prevent the individual's initial or sustained engagement in community action. On the other hand, if the community can manage citizens and active participation is sustained, their power in provoking change is increased. Community agency and capacity are enhanced when self-interest and

collective interests are intertwined and become the driving sources for public work; when differences are tolerated, deliberated, and negotiated, and conflicts managed through democratic practices (Fisher, 2000; Lewicki et al., 2002; Boyte, 2004; Mathews, 2009, 2013; Kettering Foundation, 2015).

Accordingly, through the exercise of such collaborative and public-driven work, the community also enhances its political, organizational, and strategic capabilities, and develops management and problem-solving skills (Fisher, 2000; Boyte, 2004; Mathews, 2013). Also, this work allows cherishing community's values, desires, worldviews, local knowledge, assets, and diversity (Parpart, 1995; Abloh & Ameyaw, 1997; Fisher, 2000; Perez, 2002). The community is, then, empowered as citizens work together to address common issues and take ownership to shape their future (Mathews, 2013; Kettering Foundation, 2015).

According to Boyte (2004) and Fischer (2000), collective engagement and the cooperative public work nourishes the creative, educative, and collaborative dimensions of politics, as it values the talents, knowledge, and contributions of ordinary citizens. Such community-driven politics, owned by ordinary citizens, empowers them over a culture of a technocratic expert-elite-dominated society (Boyte, 2004). Consequently, feeling, experiencing, and being acknowledged as an important asset in promoting the betterment of their community also become an inspiration for people's engagement (Toro & Verneck, 1996; Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004).

The individual agency is also developed through the processes of participating and collaborating with others in things they care about (Freire, 1970; Boyte, 2004). In the exercise of participation, individuals and their collectivity develop new relationships, ties, experiences, ideas, awareness, and important interpersonal, political and organizational skills (Freire, 1970;

Taylor, 2003; Prokopy & Castellow, 2004; Boyte, 2004). Those are important to increase self-confidence, self-determination, knowledge, structure, and social support, as capabilities for promoting change (Freire, 1970; Boyte, 2004).

Moreover, the exchange of one's experiences, local knowledge, and concerns with others of the same community, and the deliberation about their realities and needs are important to inspire and inform decision making and individual and collective action, and to develop agency (Freire, 1970; Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004). In Freire's theoretical and empirical framework (Freire, 1970), the "*problematization*" is the educational approach in which individuals actively engage in deliberating and critically analyzing their concrete reality, based on their own experiences and needs. Collective, mutual learning is developed through critical, deliberative, and dialogical processes based on unveiling real problems, issues, power relations, oppressions, conditions, and actual needs that surround the individuals and their collectivity. Through such practices, individuals enter in an enlightening process of building up awareness, knowledge, and new understandings of their reality, which is called "*conscientization*" (Freire, 1970).

Conscientization, in turn, propel and inform individuals to take action, to cope with problems, and to build change, including by challenging and overcoming power structures, oppression, and conditions that may hinder their abilities to run their lives according to with their desires (Freire, 1970). The promotion of change is carried through "*praxis*," that is a process of action and reflection upon transforming the reality. The empowerment of individuals takes place when they develop awareness of their social reality and discover themselves as agents of change, as they experience it in practice. In these processes, individuals discover their agency as they conquer positive results, small wins, visible transformations, and associated feelings of accomplishment, for instance, which become highly motivational for engagement (Freire, 1970;

Korsching & Davidson, 2013).

4.3. Power dimensions and community power structure

Other challenges in the community may also be more structural, related for instance to socio-economic conditions of the individuals and their configuration in the community and the local structure of power and decision making, which are not taken into consideration in the interactional theory. The social structure of any society is usually permeated by issues related to social injustice, oppression, and uneven distribution of power, which can be rooted historically (Freire, 1970; Parpat, 1995; Abloh & Ameyaw, 1997; Sen, 2001; Perez, 2002; Boyte, 2004; Mathews, 2009). Those affect the distribution of benefits and damages, access to opportunities, and individual's agency (Freire, 1970; Sen, 2001), for instance. Such conditions may represent a source of the deprivation and the destitution of individuals' human capabilities that give people a choice and opportunity in exercising their reasoned agency (Sen, 2001). Political participation can be seen, then, as one of those human capabilities (Sen, 2001).

The deprivation of capabilities also represents reduced power and restricted benefits of citizens over the common welfare. The deprivation of individual's political capabilities can be characterized as oppressions that reduce residents' power in self-determination and local governance and in co-producing the collective well-being.

Power is a plural concept, and most simply reflect "the ability to act or influence the ability of others or either act or choose a path of inaction" (Brennan & Israel, 2008, p. 82). Power is relational and interactive (Boyte, 2004). It is fluid and can be used, shared, and created by actors in their networks in different ways (Gaventa, 2006). Moreover, it can be seen as a negative trait, when to hold power is to exercise control of others, or in a positive perspective, related to the capacity and agency to be applied for positive action (Gaventa, 2006).

The interactional theory overlooks the issue power in social participation and community action, but authors of participatory democracy propositions (Freire, 1970; Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004; Mathews, 2009) demystify the vision of citizenship as purified and stripped of power, acknowledging its relational existence. In every process of social participation, personal motivators, the social, cultural and political contexts, as well as the behavior, the frames, and the symbolic representation of those collaborating are carried of power relations that can constrain or enable individual and collective engagement (Lyon et al., 2010). Lyon et al. (2010), for instance, discusses cases where participatory processes override existing local decision-making methods and lead to decisions that “reinforce the interests of the already powerful” (p.551).

Also, Gaventa (2006) gives an important contribution in providing a framework to assess the possibilities of transformative action in various political spaces: *the power cube*, which is also inspired by his previous work (Gaventa, 1988), the work of Bachrach & Baratz (1970), and Luke’s (1974) theoretical propositions about the *three faces* or *dimensions of power*. Such approach recognizes the power is expressed in three forms or dimensions (visible, hidden, and invisible), which should also be understood about how spaces for engagement are created (closed, invited, claimed) and to the different levels (local, national, and global) that they occur.

The three dimensions of power also represent forms of influencing social participation and exclusion in the public decision-making arena. *Visible* power is decision-making power, the conventional understanding of political power that is negotiated through formal rules and structures, institutions and procedures of decision making, and which also represents the prevalence of interests in bargaining and decision making. *Hidden* power is agenda-setting power, reflecting the actual control over decision making by powerful people and institutions, which also control who participates in the decision-making and what is on the agenda. In this

way, they maintain their influence over the process and often exclude and devalue concerns and agendas of less powerful groups (Luttrell et al., 2009). Finally, *invisible* power, or ideological power, functions by influencing how individuals sense their place in society and people around them and explains why some are prevented from questioning existing power relations (by feeling powerlessness or by accepting the *status quo*, for instance). In this way, significant problems and issues are kept from the consciousness of different players involved, even those affected by the problem. This type of power makes use of ideology and affects people's beliefs, sense of self, acceptance of the *status quo*, and produces quiescence (Gaventa, 1988). Freire's liberating propositions aim primarily at empowering people to overcome this third dimension of power through processes of conscientization, which would drive them to act to claim the first two dimensions: of participation in governance and of having their needs met.

In this way, some implications of power relations to community and democracy can be a source of the deprivation of individual capabilities and oppression, and also conflicts. They could benefit some at the expense of the collective or weaker groups, as well as influencing individual and collective engagement. At the community level, it can be reflected in who participates, who benefits, whose interests prevail and whose are excluded, who sets the agenda, and whose ideas are dominating, inclusive in framing the issues, who should be accountable, and what needs to be done to address them. It can also take place regarding whose voices are heard in and which knowledge is considered in defining issues and informing decisions for solving problems and public policy, for instance.

Those issues and the different dimensions of power (Luke's, 1974; Gaventa, 1988, 2006) are reflected in the power structure of the community, on which the success and failure of community development efforts may depend. The community power structure regards the

concentration and distribution of power and decision making, and comprise those individuals that can motivate, support, or break a project in a location, such as SMEP. The local power structure relates to who rules in the community. It also represents those who can stimulate or prevent the involvement of the residents or specific groups, and whose agenda and ideologies prevail or are neglected, according to local politics.

In community studies, there are two main groups in which power is conceptualized: the pluralist model and the elite model. The pluralist model (Dahl, 1961) defend that communities are more or less ruled according to classic democratic theory, assuming that the power structure makes decisions on behalf of the entire community and that participation takes place in open decision-making arenas. The pluralist model argues that decision-making and power are spread more broadly and power is shared in the community. Although the pluralist model acknowledges that power may distribute unequally, the assumption of political openness leads to the conclusion that the common good will typically prevail. Also, in this model, power actors vary as the issues addressed in a location change.

On the other hand, the elite model declares that power in the community is held by a small group of individuals - or elites, usually those who control the local economy, who could be in positions of power or not (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Lukes, 1974). Such dominant groups could not be the visible face in concrete decision-making in a community, but rather use the hidden and invisible power for the exclusion of participants and issues from the public arena and for repressing grievances and producing political quiescence by influencing thoughts and desires, respectively. Finally, there are those who agree that both pluralist and elitist exist in every community to some extent, and how much influence each has and how power is used is what differs (Lyon & Driskell, 2012).

Also, Lyon (2012) argues that the methods used for analyzing community power influence the type of power structure one finds. For instance, the “positional” method focuses on the individuals who hold key formal authority positions in the main organizations of the different social fields in the community. It assumes that power is held and exercised through formal positions, that those holding formal positions make the decisions, and that these people control important resources. The “decision-making” method is close to the pluralist approach and traces the history of one or more issues or decisions, identifying power actors that participated in the decisions. The central assumption is that power affecting decisions manifests in visible involvement in the decision-making process in the community. The “reputation approach” may identify both visible and concealed power holders, according to the perception of community informants. It assumes that reputation as a powerful actor is an indicator of one’s ability to affect local issues and decisions. Finally, the “social participation” method seeks to identify those who are active in voluntary organizations, and assumes that the power affecting collective decisions is attained primarily through active social participation and formal leadership roles in community organizations.

In this way, the community power structure and the distribution or concentration of power can, directly and indirectly, influence the participation of residents and entail political and power disputes. Such issues complement propositions from the interactional and democratic participation perspectives for analyzing the leadership activism for SMEP. Also, another key aspect regards the very strategies employed in the implementation of SMEP locally, which will be addressed in the following.

4.4. Strategies for the local implementation of SMEP

Finally, I must also consider other aspects regarding SMEP. It is not a voluntary social

movement, but rather a top-down policy created by the Brazilian government to try to incite individual participation and collective action at the community level. Thus, one can assume that the engagement of community members in leading SMEP also depended on the strength of the SMEP propositions and the efficacy of the strategies created and used by BMEC and other players in the effort of implementing the program locally.

In the case of BMEC, such strategies (presented in the previous chapter), comprise the plan of communication and distribution of information (e.g., communication materials, virtual platforms, discourse, among others), approaches for community leadership development (e.g., workshops, events, guidance, supporting material), and other tactics utilized for, and during the local implementation of SMEP (which I will detail in chapter five), including those for building local ownership and accountability for SMEP. That last group of strategies varied according to the particularities of the SMEP implementation process in each town and region.

Also, Toro and Werneck (1996) make clear the importance of the player who creates and leads the implementation of such collective action for motivating and enabling the engagement of the citizens in their social mobilization approach. The authors recommend several actions that they consider crucial to be performed by such a leader, such as creating appealing imagery (or the common purpose) to inspire activism, empowering citizens to believe in their agency and capacity of provoking positive change, ensuring *collectivization* – or making citizens feel they belong to a larger group of people working for the same efforts, offering references and guidance for actions that can be applied in their routines, and monitoring results.

Moreover, the setting of this study – the communities of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region – also had another important player in the implementation of SMEP: an NGO called Gaia Social, which will be discussed in more detail in chapters 4 and 5. Gaia Social was the facilitator

of the SMEP implementation process, supporter of social mobilizers and local SMEP Committees, helping to motivate and to organize them. Gaia Social also used several strategies to enhance the local institutional support for SMEP and the individual and collective agency, to develop community leadership and organizing, and to create a regional collaborative network of social mobilizers. It is assumed, then, that the local leadership activism of SMEP was also influenced by the actions and approaches of the NGO in the region.

Moreover, at the local level, the very decisions made by communities regarding the implementation of SMEP may have affected the engagement of the social mobilizers, enabling or preventing their participation, and motivating or discouraging them. The organizational structure of the leadership of SMEP, the strategies the social mobilizers utilized, and the local support also may have influenced their engagement as leaders of the actions (Toro & Werneck, 1996).

Therefore, the effects of the national, regional, and local strategies utilized in the implementation of SMEP in the communities are also exciting to investigate.

5. Conceptual framework and variables

The theoretical propositions chosen for this study helped to elucidate several aspects that might have influenced positively or negatively the activism of local leaders (social mobilizers) in carrying out the SMEP activities in their communities aiming at engaging others. To design the conceptual framework of this study, then, I combined those with insights gained from the review of the literature, the pilot study I conducted in 2015 in the community, and my previous experiences with the implementation of SMEP in the cases.

Among other factors, the individual and collective involvement of social mobilizers could be affected by the characteristics and conditions of the individuals and the roles they play in their families and communities, by dynamics, capacity and structures existent in the community, by

the socio-political contexts that the participation and action take place, as well as by the specifics strategies utilized in the implementation of SMEP in each community. Based on those aspects, the four main concepts (conceptual groups) I chose to explore in this study are sociodemographic characteristics of social mobilizers, community capacity, power relations, conflicts, and empowerment, and the strategy and structure of the local implementation of SMEP (*Figure 2*).



Figure 2. The conceptual framework of this study, representing potential factors influencing the active engagement of social mobilizers in leading the activities proposed by SMEP.

The following research questions will guide the investigation, being grounded in the theoretical and conceptual aspects presented:

1. What is the relationship between social mobilizers' sociodemographic characteristics and their engagement in the leadership of activities/efforts suggested by SMEP?
2. What is the relationship between conflicts and power relations and the social mobilizers' engagement in the leadership of activities/efforts suggested by SMEP?
3. What is the relationship between community capacity and the social mobilizers' engagement in the leadership of activities/efforts suggested by SMEP?
4. What is the relationship between the structure and the strategy of local implementation of the SMEP and the engagement of social mobilizers in the leadership of its activities/efforts?

5.1. The variables within each conceptual group

Leadership (social mobilizer's) engagement (or activism) in SMEP activities is the dependent variable of this study, although an interdependent relationship with the other factors might exist. Leadership activism in the case of SMEP refers to the active and purposeful participation of social mobilizers in conducting and implementing SMEP activities in their communities. Leadership activism may also vary regarding length, frequency, and characteristics among social mobilizers, although I will not explore those details in depth in this study. The four groups of independent variables represent the concepts that frame this study: sociodemographic characteristics, power relations, and empowerment, community capacity, structure and strategy of local implementation of SMEP, which will be detailed following.

5.1.1. Sociodemographics

Personal and socioeconomic characteristics of participants are thought to relate to social participation and can also be used as control variables (Babbie, 1998; Brennan, 2006, 2003). Previous research and related literature have shown that these kinds of variables can influence the degree members to become active in their communities (Brennan, 2003). In this research, I included the type of variables to characterize the local leadership of SMEP in the EHR and to identify their possible impacts on the social mobilizers' engagement. I considered the following sociodemographic variables in this study: *gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, religion, employment status and position, and field of work.*

5.1.2. Conflicts, power relations, and empowerment

Existing conflicts and power relations can discourage or prevent the generation of social participation (Gaventa, 1989, 2006; Lewicki et al, 2002; Allen, 2004) or undermine and ruin it when it is present. Power relations can also influence leaders' participation and actuation. Although Toro and Werneck (1996) defend that power should be equally distributed among

participants in their proposal of social mobilization that frames the SMEP, several authors (Gaventa 1982, 2006; Lyon and Driskell, 2012; Taylor, 2011) indicate that power is unequally distributed in a community and that this influences social participation - who participates and how, whose interests prevail, who are excluded, who decides, who benefits, among others..

In this way, the power structure of a community and power relations occurring at the local level also affects social participation in collective action, planning, and decision-making. In the case of SMEP, community politics and power relations and dynamics may have influenced the implementation of the program, its characteristics, the social mobilizers' agency, the social engagement of subjects and groups, and the possibility of the collaboration of social actors. Furthermore, conflicts between social players might also have affected individual engagement and collective collaboration. Thus, in this study, I will investigate the following aspects regarding power in relation to leadership engagement in the SMEP: *influence of authorities and partisan politics* (interference of individuals in power positions and / or of issues between opposite political parties), *municipal elections and changes in public administration* (continuity or changes of the political groups in charge of public administration), *conflict and power disputes among players* (including among the social mobilizers), *sense of agency* (related to autonomy for acting and feeling responsible and able to produce positive change), *sense of self as a valuable asset* (feeling good for being able to contribute to the community), and *democratic participation and civic engagement* (related to exercising citizenship and civic engagement, opportunities for participation and decision-making, and feeling that one's voices were heard). The last three points also correspond to aspects related to the concept of empowerment.

5.1.3. Community Capacity

As power relations, other community dynamics and characteristics are thought to

influence leadership and social participation. These mechanisms, especially those related to community capacity, can both influence and be influenced by individual and collective engagement (Wilkinson, 1991, 1999; Brennan, 2006; Brennan & Luloff, 2007). Local leadership and social engagement in the context proposed by SMEP was anticipated to both influence and be influenced by community capacity.

In the context of this research, community capacity aspects investigated in relation to leadership activism included: *leadership* (including local leadership structure and social mobilizers' leadership attitude and previous experience in leadership activities and training), *participation in other activities or formative events promoted by the NGOs, community agency* (including existence and membership of community organizations, existence and participation in other collective action or volunteer work, and collective collaboration of members and social actors), *social interaction* (related to interaction with community members, other social mobilizers and specific stakeholders, and frequency of activities promoted through SMEP), *social ties and networks* (related to support of acquaintances, creation of new social ties, existence and development of social networks and partnerships inside and outside the community), *concern about the community and local needs* (shared concerns), *sense of collective/community* (related to being part of a group with a purpose or self-identification with the locality), and *community involvement and support* (regarding the participation and enthusiasm of community members in SMEP activities).

5.1.4. Structure and strategy of local implementation of SMEP

The fourth concept refers to the methodological and structural proposal of SMEP and the way it was implemented locally. Those issues were anticipated to influence positively or negatively the participation of the social mobilizers. Aspects related to the *orientation of social*

mobilizers for action (such as materials, tools, information), *training and learning* (workshops and events), *networking through SMEP*, and *support provided by BMEC* might have either succeeded in inspiring, motivating, encouraging, informing, guiding, and supporting the social mobilizers' active engagement or failed in doing so.

Likewise, aspects related to the organizational structure of the local leadership of SMEP, as well as to the strategy and features of how SMEP was implemented locally, were thought to have facilitated or hindered the social mobilizers' activity. In this way, I investigated aspects regarding *local institutional support* (by local government, schools, city councils and other socio-political actors, and funding), *creation of an specific municipal law regarding SMEP*, *organization of leadership in committees and centralization* (including internal collaboration, autonomy, dependency, involvement of the MSE), *support and influence of NGOs*, *strategic planning* (existence and application of an action plan), *frequency and repertoire of actions* (types of activities developed and their occurrence), and the *ownership of SMEP by the social mobilizers* (sustained implementation of SMEP over time) in relation to their activism. Finally, I also considered *communication* among social mobilizers and *evaluation and perceived results*, once they were indicated by Toro and Werneck (1996) as aspects that might induce success or flaws in motivating people's active participation in social mobilization efforts.

In the next chapter, I present the methodology used to conduct this study for answering the four research questions. I will present the case-study protocol created to guide this research, including methods and strategies of data collection and analysis, decisions regarding the selected cases and sampling, as well as the approaches used for enhancing the validity and reliability of this study.

CHAPTER IV – Methodology

A realidade social é o próprio dinamismo da vida individual e coletiva com toda a riqueza de significados dela transbordante. Essa mesma realidade é mais rica que qualquer teoria, qualquer pensamento e qualquer discurso que possamos elaborar sobre ela. A pesquisa social é sempre tateante, mas, ao progredir, elabora critérios de orientação cada vez mais precisos.

[Social reality is the dynamism of individual and collective life with all its richness overflowing with meanings. This same reality is richer than any theory, any thought, and any speech that we can elaborate on it. Social research is always groping, but as it progresses, it develops increasingly more precise guidance criteria.]

Maria Cecília de Souza Minayo, Brazilian social sciences researcher

In the following chapter, I present an overview of the methodology used to conduct this study. Through this research, I sought to identify factors that have encouraged or hindered the active participation of social mobilizers in developing social mobilization for education activities in six towns in the EHR. This section focuses on the discussion of the research approach and the embedded multiple case study design, the units of analysis, the case study protocol, the site selection criteria, sampling methods, data collection efforts, strategies of analysis, and aspects related to ethics, reliability, validity, and limitations.

1. The qualitative approach of the study

I used a qualitative approach (Ragin et al., 2004; Maxwell, 2008) to conduct this study, because it is the most appropriate one to address the objective and research questions of this study.

According to Ragin et al. (2004):

Qualitative research involves in-depth, case-oriented study of a relatively small number of cases, including the single-case study. Qualitative research seeks detailed knowledge of specific cases, often with the goal of finding out “how”

things happen (or happened). Qualitative researchers' primary goal is to "make the facts understandable," and often place less emphasis on deriving inferences or predictions. (p.8)

I was inspired to use the qualitative approach in this research for three additional reasons. First, because of my previous professional and personal experience with the cases of this study (SMEP and selected communities), which I believe could add valuable insights to this study. Since a qualitative researcher plays important roles in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data and the contexts (Creswell, 2012), I believe that being in such position could maximize my contributions. For instance, my prolonged time in the settings and experience with the cultural context and SMEP has helped me to understand situations and behaviors better, to identify factors, and to interact with residents, which led to important outcomes to this qualitative study that I will explore later.

The second and third reasons regard the participants of this study. I wanted to explore the experiences and perceptions of individuals that actively experienced the implementation of SMEP and who BMEC did not consult for policy formation. I consider their perceptions, experiences, and local knowledge valuable contributions for building knowledge and informing policy. A qualitative approach could create a good opportunity for giving them voice, including for recommendations for the future policy and practices. Finally, although this research did not embrace a participatory approach, I consider all the participants as co-creators of this study and I commit to sharing results and insights with them. The qualitative approach gave me the opportunity to be closer to the subjects and their reality in a relationship of mutual collaboration. Assuming that this study can also contribute to their practices as community leaders, engaged citizens, and public servants, I plan to visit those communities to discuss the findings and

recommendations with participants and interested social actors after the conclusion of this dissertation. I also intend to compose a specific Portuguese-written brochure with the study's results to share with them.

2. Research Design

2.1. Methodology – Embedded Multiple Case Study

This study is characterized by a case study research, which can be defined as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, 2012, p.73). According to Creswell (2012), “a case study is a good approach when the inquirer has identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (p.73). In this way, it is a good methodological strategy for the purpose and objectives of this research.

More precisely, the methodology of this study can be described as a multiple, comparative case study (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2015) because it involves the analysis of the issue (active engagement of local leadership in SMEP) within and across selected cases (six communities in the Estreito Hydroelectric Region in Brazil), by also promoting comparison between local contexts. I chose this approach by assuming that the investigation of multiple cases could contribute to identify and to understand a greater range of issues and processes affecting the activism of social mobilizers in developing SMEP activities. Moreover, the comparison among sites should also contribute towards elucidating some aspects about how the local context and community dynamics relate to social participation in the context of SMEP.

Based on Yin (2015), the design of this multiple case study can be labeled as embedded

because it involves multiple units of analysis within each case. According to Babbie (2005), a unit of analysis can be understood as the “thing whose characteristics we are trying to describe or explain” (p. 96). In this way, the engagement of individual social mobilizers is the unit of analysis in each community in this study. Also, the implementation of SMEP *per se* in each community can be understood as another unit of analysis, because it represents the context in which the issue of SMEP leadership activism took place. *Figure 3* shows a representation of the design of this embedded multiple case study.

Objective : Factors related to local leadership engagement in SMEP

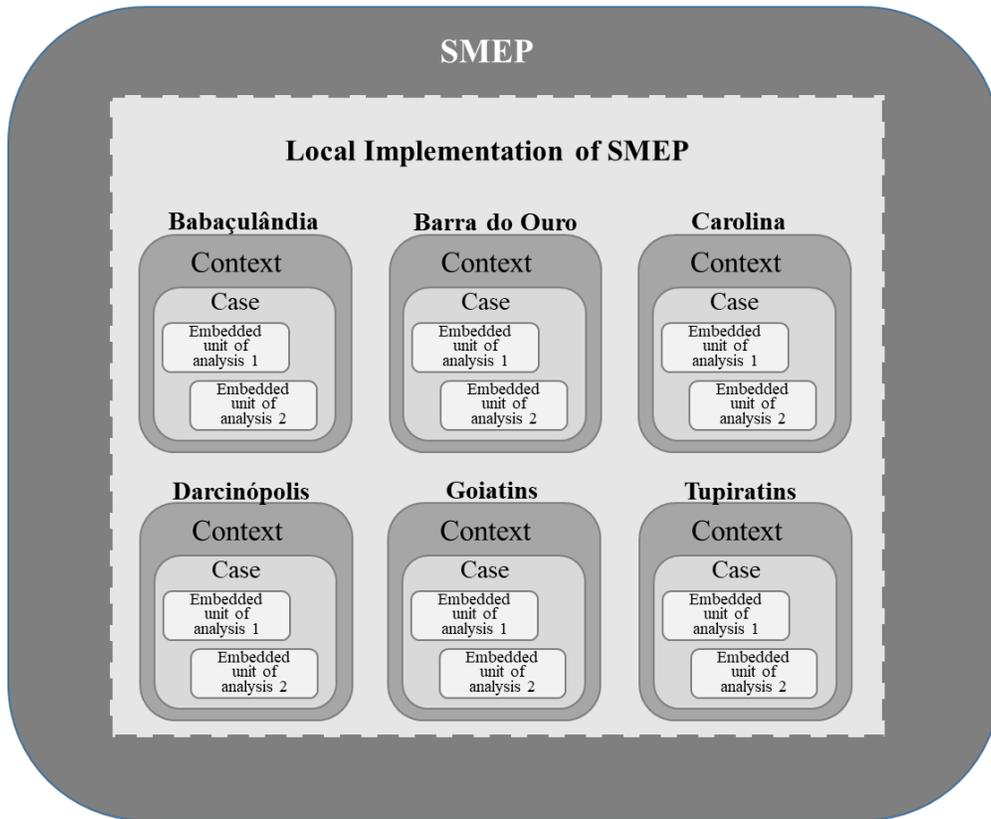


Figure 3. The embedded multiple-case study design of this research.

Finally, although the primary intention was not of generalizing findings external to the context of this study, there are discussions in the qualitative literature that advocate that case study, especially in the comparative form, can result in some generalizability (Flyvbjerg, 2006;

Creswell, 2009; Mills et al, 2010; Maxwell, 2012; Goodrick, 2014). For example, such an approach can contribute to development of a broader theory (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and for producing more generalizable knowledge about causal questions, including “how and why particular programmes or policies work or fail to work” (Goodrick, 2014, p.1). In this way, the choice of this research design also supports the researcher’s purpose of using the findings to inform future policy.

2.1.1 The case study protocol

In addition to defining the methodological design, another important step towards achieving the objective of this research was the development of the case study protocol. According to Yin (2015), the protocol is a major way of increasing the reliability of a multiple-case study, because it guides the researcher in carrying out the data collection from a single case and to replicate it to the others. For the creation of this study protocol, I followed the steps proposed by Yin (2015), by making careful decisions regarding the overview of the case study, data collection procedures and questions, analysis and report.

This study is grounded in literature review, previous experiences of the researcher, and the theoretical and conceptual framework built for this work. I intended to identify factors affecting the local leadership activism in SMEP by conducting within and cross-case analyses of different towns that initiated the implementation of SMEP at the same time and under the same conditions. Because of these and other specific features, I chose the Estreito Hydroelectric Region (EHR), whose communities also diversify by multiple characteristics and local contexts. Among those, I selected six communities based on a set of criteria I developed for maximizing the comparison.

After determining the main independent variables for representing each of the four

concepts focused by this study (socio-demographics, community capacity, conflicts and power relations, and the strategy and structure of the local implementation of SMEP), I made decisions about appropriate methods for data collection. Interviews, observation, and document analysis were thought to be those that could best contribute to answering the research questions. For the interviews, I selected as key-informants four groups of social actors that were essential in the implementation of SMEP: the social mobilizers (local leaders of SMEP), Municipal Secretaries of Education (MSEs), and representatives of GAIA Social and the BMEC. I developed protocols for the direct observation and the interviews, which involved different sets of questions for each type of participant.

To enhance the credibility and validity of this study, I employed the resource of triangulation, by employing different methods for data collection and different sources of information. It also included getting the perspectives of different types of key informants, who played distinct roles in the leadership of SMEP. I utilized the triangulation of both methods and sources to get complementary information, new insights, and a broader analysis of the research problem (Creswell, 2009). Triangulation also allowed convergence of data, reinforcing the findings. By using triangulation, I also was attentive to divergences across methods and sources in order to enable different perspectives to emerge and to be contrasted (Maxwell, 2012).

In **Table 1**, I present the groups of independent variables and the triangulation of methods. I will discuss the use of triangulation in this study with more details in the validity section of this chapter (item 5). I also provide more information about the independent variables in the section 2.4 and in the last section of Chapter III, where I presented the conceptual framework of this study.

This case study protocol also included planning and procedures for getting approval from

the Pennsylvania State University's Office of Research Protection through its Institution Reviewed Board (IRB number STUDY00007080).

Table 1. Independent variables and the triangulation of research methods.

Concepts (independent variables)		Methods		
		Interviews	Observation	Secondary data / Document analysis
Sociodemographics	1) Gender		x	
	2) Age	x		
	3) Marital status	x		
	4) Educational attainment	x		
	5) Religion	x		
	6) Employment status and position	x		
	7) Field of Work	x	x	
Power relations, conflicts, and empowerment	1) Influence of authorities and partisan politics	x	x	x
	2) Municipal elections and political discontinuity	x	x	x
	3) Conflicts and power disputes among players	x	x	x
	4) Sense of agency	x		
	5) Sense of self as a valuable asset	x		
	6) Democratic participation	x		
Community capacity	1) Leadership	x	x	x
	2) Community agency	x	x	x
	3) Participation in other activities or formative events promoted by the NGOs	x	x	x
	4) Social ties and networks	x	x	x
	5) Social interaction	x	x	x
	6) Concern about the locality / community / local needs	x	x	
	7) Sense of collective / belonging to a community	x	x	
	8) Community engagement and support (SMEP actions)	x	x	x
Structure / strategy of local implementation of SMEP	1) Orientation - materials, information, tools	x	x	x
	2) Training - workshops and events	x	x	x
	3) Network and visibility through SMEP	x	x	
	4) Institutional and financial support	x	x	x
	5) Existence of SMEP municipal law	x	x	x
	6) Committees, organizational structure, and centralization	x	x	x
	7) Support from NGOs and other partners	x	x	x
	8) Action plan / strategic planning	x	x	x
	9) Frequency and repertoire of actions	x	x	x
	10) Ownership of SMEP and dependency	x	x	
	11) Communication	x	x	
	12) Results, achievements, and evaluation	x		x

2.2. Site selection and strategies for the selection of the multiple cases – The six communities of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region

The communities of the Estreito Hydroelectric Plant Region (EHR) were chosen for this study. The Region, (*Figure 4*) involves 12 small municipalities of two Brazilian states: Estreito and Carolina, in the state of Maranhão (MA), and Aguiarnópolis, Babaçulândia, Barra do Ouro, Darcinópolis, Filadélfia, Goiatins, Itapiratins, Palmeirante, Palmeiras do Tocantins, and Tupiratins, in the state of Tocantins (TO). They also belong to two distinctive political regions, being TO part of the North and MA part of the Northeast. EHR's total population is about 131,400 people (IBGE, 2015). The smallest town is Tupiratins, TO, with 2,500 people (IBGE, 2015), and the largest is Estreito, MA, with 40,6 people (IBGE, 2015).

The EHR is predominantly a rural area, which is situated in one of the government's priority regions for development and is marked by several social, economic, political, and environmental challenges. MA is also considered the poorest state in the country. From the researcher's perceptions, there are also difficulties in providing and accessing quality public services. Furthermore, one can observe signs of low community agency. Getting together to solve local problems seems not to be part of the residents' routines. Community organizations are rare, usually represented by faith-based institutions. The government is the main provider of public services, and some actions are also taken by those organizations, such as fundraising and campaigns to support the most needed. External NGOs and governmental agencies occasionally are attracted to the region to provide developmental projects of diverse focuses.

The local government and partisan politics play an important role in the dynamics of the communities, including the appointment of public servants for specific positions, the continuity of programs and projects, access to federal funding, and the prioritization of agenda regarding

issues of public interest. There are also signs and evidence of self-interest and corruption in governmental leaders and civic servants all over the region. Finally, issues of power and decision making are concentrated historically in the hands of few financially influential people and traditional political families in each community – which is common in the North and Northeastern Brazil. Local elite and opportunistic outsiders seem to take good advantage of the great economic, environmental, and tourist potential of the region as well.

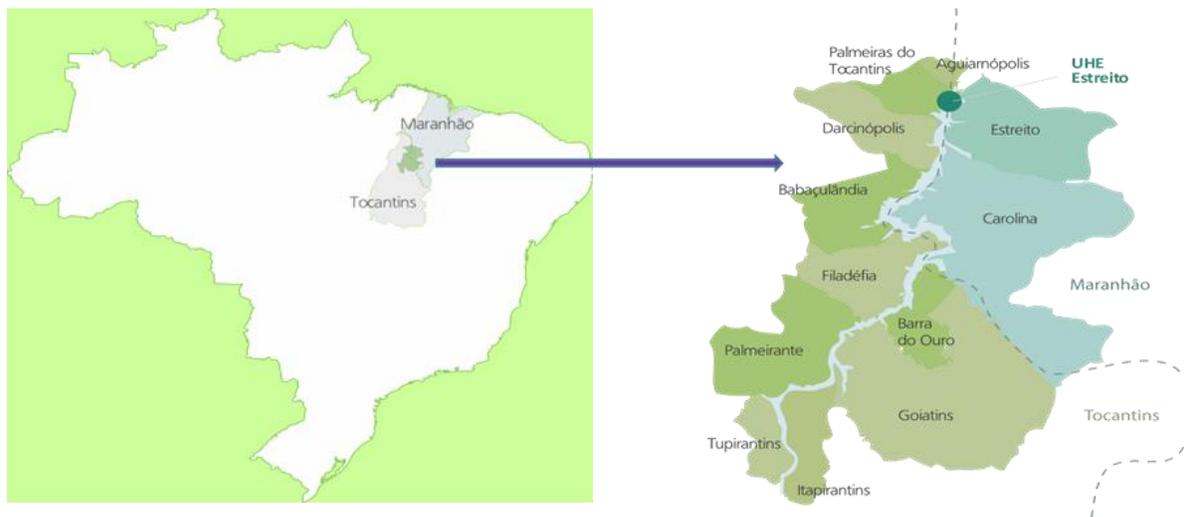


Figure 4. Map of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region (EHR), Brazil.

This region was selected for this study because it offers a unique setting regarding the implementation of SMEP, which could provide a good opportunity for comparison and enrich the identification and understanding of issues affecting the engagement of social mobilizers. To start, they are a set of neighboring towns, which both share many socio-cultural characteristics and differ in several features and contexts, offering a diverse setting for investigation. Also, the 12 towns were under the same impact and the development strategies of external agents, which ended up guiding the local implementation of SMEP, especially by an outside NGO named Gaia Social. As a result, those towns were submitted to the same process for the initial implementation of the program. The communities received training and support for the implementation of SMEP

under the same circumstances, in the same period, by the same external facilitators. This process also facilitated the collaboration between social mobilizers and public managers across the towns.

However, despite the same treatment offered by the external agents (Gaia Social and BMEC) to all the cases, it was the local leadership developed for SMEP in each town (social mobilizers and MDE) that became responsible for taking ownership of its local implementation. That resulted in differences in SMEP among the communities regarding the kind and frequency of activities implementation and decision making regarding the local structure and strategies adopted for SMEP. The engagement of social mobilizers and the Municipal Department of Education (MDE) also varied, in a way that such efforts faded over time in several places, while remained active in some.

In a broader context, the 12 municipalities share the impacts resulting from the installation of a hydroelectric power plant in the Tocantins River by a consortium of private enterprises in 2011. Because of the negative environmental, social, and economic impact. The consortium was requested by the lenders (banks) investing in local and regional development through projects in the areas of education, health, sanitation, economic and social development, from 2010 to 2015.

In this period, among numerous actions, some influential Brazilian NGOs (Gaia Social, Comunidade Educativa CEDAC, Alfabetização Solidária, INMED Brasil, and Care Brasil) were contracted to conduct development work in the region, giving special attention to the field of education. Through different projects and approaches, such agents aimed to prepare and engage local actors from various positions for the improvement of diverse aspects of local education, including public management, literacy and adult education, health and nutrition, municipal

councils, implementation of national policies, and monitoring of educational indicators. Efforts also focused on developing leadership and enhancing the local administration of policies, citizen participation, and community action (Gaia Social, 2011, 2012, 2013). The implementation of the SMEP in those places was also a result of such developmental activities, led by Gaia Social.

Gaia Social, in particular, played a major role in the implementation of SMEP in the region. The NGO was the one who suggested SMEP to the MDE of the 12 towns and articulated the need for the presence of delegates of BMEC to the region in 2012. At that time, the municipality of Estreito had already implemented the program by themselves a few years before, so, in this particular case, the NGO acted more like a re-animator of SMEP activities. Also, in the entire region, Gaia Social had an active role in organizing and serving as a facilitator of the SMEP workshops and other events between BMEC and the communities in 2012 and 2013. Gaia Social encouraged and supported the social mobilizers and MSEs through visits, meetings, and events, stimulating them to take agency and ownership toward the management of SMEP and the engagement in its activities by the end of 2013 (Gaia Social, 2012, 2013). Finally, Gaia also spread the idea of combining SMEP with other governmental and NGO programs, such as rural libraries, literacy, and health and nutrition at school. I will present more about the roles of Gaia Social and other social actors in the implementation of SMEP in the EHR in the next Chapter.

In general, the process led by Gaia Social fostered several occasions (trainings, events, meetings, collective actions) for social interaction not only among local actors from different social fields but also among social mobilizers of neighboring communities, who were usually brought together to meet and to work in collaboration. Also, social mobilizers often supported and attended the SMEP events promoted by their neighbors. In this way, the SMEP activities seem to have created opportunities for developing new social ties in the region, as expressed with

enthusiasm by some social mobilizers in a scoping visit carried out in July 2015.

Through the following months and years of the initial implementation of the SMEP in that region, the issue of demobilization of social mobilizers and committees became a significant challenge nationally, especially after Gaia Social left the region at the end of 2013. However, in some communities, continuous efforts of some social mobilizers and committees could still be seen, even after the termination of the program by BMEC in 2016.

In this scenario, among the twelve municipalities that are part of the EHR, I selected six to comprise the cases of this study: Babaçulândia, Barra do Ouro, Darcinópolis, Goiatins, and Tupiratins, in the state of Tocantins, and Carolina, in the state of Maranhão. The first criterion was the readiness and interest of the social mobilizers in collaborating to this study, because they are the central subjects of this research and owners of the stories investigated and told. Thus, based on the results of informal interviews with social mobilizers and MSE in a scoping visit I carried out in June 2015, I dismissed three communities (Aguiarnópolis, Palmeiras do Tocantins, and Filadélfia). Also, to maintain the equivalence of the cases for comparison, I discarded the community of Estreito because of their previous experience in implementing SMEP.

Among the remaining eight communities, the selection of the cases followed the strategy of a purposeful maximizing sampling (Creswell, 2012) or the maximum-variation cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006), for optimizing the utility of information from small samples and single cases. In this strategy, the researcher selects the cases based on different characteristics and perspectives they show on context, problem, process, or event (Creswell, 2012), which informs about the significance of various circumstances to the cases' processes and outcomes (Flyvbjerg, 2006). For this study, I selected the final six communities based on the variation in the following aspects, in combination: size of population, number of social mobilizers in 2015 (active and

inactive), creation of municipal law regarding SMEP, level of SMEP activity in 2013, status of SMEP activity in 2015, political discontinuity in the MDE in 2013 (after municipal elections), centralization of the SMEP leadership in the MDE, and the support of the MSE to the SMEP Committee (between 2013 and 2015), as shown in **Table 2**. I chose those three last criteria based on the importance that the institutional and financial support of the local government had for the implementation of SMEP, as I will detail in Chapter V. I assumed that it would be insightful to compare different scenarios concerning the involvement of the MSE in the SMEP Committee and the political support of those who occupied this public position before and after the municipal elections.

Table 2. Selected EHR communities and the criteria used in the maximum-variation cases.

	Population (IBGE, 2015)	# social mobilizers in 2015	SMEP municipal law	SMEP activity in 2013*	SMEP activity in 2015*	High centralization of SMEP on the MSE	Political discontinuity after 2013 elections	Support from MSE after 2013 elections
Carolina (MA)	23.9k	7	yes	2	0	no	yes	yes/opposition
Babaçulândia (TO)	10.7k	16	yes	5	2	no	yes	yes/opposition
Barra do Ouro(TO)	4.5k	8	no	3	3	yes	no	yes
Darcinópolis (TO)	5.8K	11	yes	3	0	yes	yes	yes
Goiatins (TO)	12.8k	16	no	4	1	no	yes	yes/no
Tupiratins (TO)	2.5k	13	yes	5	4	yes	yes	yes

*0 = no activity; 1 = very low activity; 2 = low activity; 3 = moderate activity; 4 = high activity; 5 = very high activity

2.3. Population and Sampling procedures – Purposive and snowball sampling

I used purposive sampling to identify participants and settings for the interviews and observation in this study that could provide the most important information (Maxwell, 2008). The key-informants selected were local leaders in implementing SMEP (the “social mobilizers”), Municipal Secretaries of Education (MSE), and representatives of BMEC and of Gaia Social. Because the purpose of this study is to factors affecting the first level of engagement in the SMEP proposal, which reflects the activism of the local leadership in implementing the policy, I

focused my population on the social mobilizers and MSEs. Those individuals were the ones directly involved and responsible for the local implementation of SMEP and its continuity, and their experiences and perceptions are central for answering my four research questions. I also believe that the perspectives of representatives of BMEC and Gaia Social that were actively involved in the case can also bring important contributions and new insights for my investigation. In the next chapter, I will provide a full description of the roles of those social actors in the leadership and implementation of SMEP in the EHR. Finally, I also acknowledge that by focusing the population of this study on the leaders of SMEP, I did not assess the perspective of other citizens that have participated in the activities of the program.

Regarding the first group, the initial population frame considered social mobilizers with the following criteria: all individuals that participated in SMEP formative workshops led by BMEC and events for social mobilizers (national, regional, and local forums) between 2012 and 2014, all members of local official SMEP Committees, and individuals appointed by peers and local government officials as those playing the role of leaders in purposeful efforts of mobilization in the context of SMEP (until 2015). I identified the subjects through the attendance lists of two workshops and a regional forum of SMEP (held in 2012 and 2013), as well as the official documents that assigned membership for local SMEP committees and documents elaborated by the committees and the MDEs, collected during the scoping visit in 2015. Some social mobilizers also included some names during the informal interviews. As a result, the initial population frame of social mobilizers of the six selected communities had a total of 64 participants: Carolina (7), Babaçulândia (16), Barra do Ouro (8), Darcinópolis (11), Goiatins (16), and Tupiratins (13).

My efforts in identifying other residents acting as social mobilizers were still ongoing

when I visited the communities in June 2017 for data collection. One strategy I used, at that time was to check with one or two key-informants from each locality (usually social mobilizers who were leaders of the SMEP committees). This decision was really important to this study for confirming that not all individuals who participated in the SMEP formative workshops and events became social mobilizers. On the other hand, it also became clear that several other individuals that had not participated in these formative activities ended up integrating the local committees or became actively involved in carrying out SMEP.

During the data collection in the field, I realized that, to achieve the research objective, the purposive sampling should involve as key-informants those actors who had been actively engaged in the implementation of SMEP activities at least once. Thus, the social mobilizers I sought to comprise the sample turned out to be those who had effectively participated in executing SMEP activities.

To fulfill this task, the second strategy I used was snowball sampling, which is “a method for generating a field sample of the individuals possessing the characteristics of interest by asking initial contacts if they could name a few individuals with similar characteristics that might agree to participate” (Lofland & Lofland, 2006, p. 43). In this way, I started by identifying the “effective” social mobilizers by checking my initial list with the leaders of the local SMEP committees and also by asking their identification of others. I kept asking for these identifications from the following interviewees until the names became redundant.

From the initial population frame of 71 subjects, the purposive sampling excluded and added some potential participants, resulting in 77 individuals (**Table 3**). The final number of social mobilizers interviewed was 59, due to the availability of the participants.

Table 3. Evolution of purposive and final sampling

Community	Initial population frame (2015)	Purposive sampling (2017)	Final number of interviewees (2017)
Carolina	7	7	6
Babaçulândia	16	12	9
Barra do Ouro	8	14	10
Darcinópolis	11	10	6
Goiatins	16	20	16
Tupiratins	13	14	12
<i>Total</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>59</i>

I interviewed eleven individuals that have occupied the position of MSE between 2012 and 2017. The great majority also played the role of social mobilizers. I also interviewed the representative of GAIA Social that worked closely with the social mobilizers in those communities between 2012 and 2013 and three BMEC officials that were members of the SMEP management team, including one of the instructors of the formative workshops and the one who conceived and created SMEP in 2008. In total, I interviewed 63 key-informants.

2.4. The variables of the study

Although leadership's (social mobilizers) engagement (or activism) in SMEP activities might be anticipated to exist in an interdependent relationship with the other factors, this is primarily seen in the scope of this study as a dependent variable. Leadership engagement in the case of SMEP refers to the active and purposeful participation of social mobilizers in conducting and implementing SMEP activities in their communities. Leadership engagement may also vary regarding length, frequency, and characteristics among social mobilizers, although those details were not explored in depth in this study.

Four groups of variables, representing the concepts that frame this study, were primarily identified as independent and included for the investigation of their role in fostering or in

hindering local leadership engagement in the SMEP: sociodemographic characteristics, power relations, and empowerment, community capacity, structure and strategy of local implementation of SMEP. The independent variable groupings in this study were set based on literature review, previous researcher's experience and observation of SMEP activities in practice, prior scoping visit carried out in those communities in 2015, and a critical conceptual analysis of SMEP.

Data regarding socio-demographics were collected through observation or during the interview sections and registered in the social mobilizers' interview protocol (Appendix C). I gathered data related to the dependent variable and the other three groups of independent variables through other methods, including interviews, observation, and document analysis (**Table 1**). More details regarding the operationalization of variables can be seen at Chapter III, where the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study are discussed.

3. Methods – Data collection and analysis

In this study, I used three sources of data: documentation, interviews, and observation. I collected most of the data during fieldwork in the six communities, between June 6th and July 4th, 2017. I carried out the analysis simultaneously and, in the months, following.

3.1. Data collection instrumentation

Prior to formal data collection, I developed some important instruments for the study. First, I enhanced the recruitment materials (Appendix A) and the informed consent (Appendix B) documents for informing the participants and for getting their permission for the use of the information provided. I also developed research protocols to support the data collection methods to apply in the field. These were subjected to peer review. The research protocols, as well as the content of the recruitment materials and the informed consent were approved by the IRB of the Pennsylvania State University in May 2017.

I developed one specific interview protocol for each of the four groups of informants (Appendix C). The protocols are slightly different but follow the same logic. I kept some of the questions the same to get the perspectives of different participants, and modified others to get additional information regarding specific themes and issues. I also added several probing questions in the protocol, just as reminders of possible follow up on the issues inquired.

In general, the questions related to participants' experiences, perceptions, opinions, and suggestions about SMEP, its local implementation, the local education, issues related to community capacity and dynamics. Other questions also aimed at gathering the description of the context and process (activities) of local implementation of SMEP and their outcomes. Finally, I also asked for suggestions of how SMEP could better work in their communities, with the purpose of giving the participants voice and opportunity to contribute to the recommendations for future policy and program development as a result of this study.

The last question of the protocol was general, open to any additional comments the participant considered important. In the fieldwork, I discovered that this strategy was very valuable because it allowed the revelation of significant information regarding power dynamics and conflicts, the community, the local context, local public education issues, among others.

Regarding BMEC representatives, the interview protocol included inquiries about their involvement with SMEP, the history of the policy (including changes, reasons, and procedures related to its creation and termination), and the informants' perceptions regarding controversies and tensions in the scope of SMEP. Another group of inquiry involved the approach used by BMEC in the local implementation of SMEP in the EHR region and their perceptions about uniqueness and factors that affected that work.

I practiced reflexivity regarding the questions posed and kept adjusting the protocol

during the fieldwork when needed. I perceived that depending on the current status of SMEP at that time (if still ongoing or ended), some questions to social mobilizers had to be adapted, excluded, or added.

I also included a protocol for observation of social mobilizers' sociodemographic characteristics for application in the interview session (Appendix C). Moreover, for each community, I developed some specific questions to guide observation of the local context. Most of them were related to local dynamics, SMEP implementation, and local Committees (including community organizations and actions, the existence of municipal law and official declarations, institutional support, the status of local education and councils, the organization of SMEP Committee, etc.). I kept constantly adding and adjusting points for observation according to new information that was gathered through the interviews and documents.

3.2. Sources of evidence and data collection procedures

3.2.1 Documentation

In this study, documentation had several important uses. First, it informed decision-making regarding case selection, the population frame, and sampling, by providing specific information about the communities and main local leaders involved in SMEP and Committees. Also, documents were important tools to facilitate access to the field, by providing contact information of participants, for instance. In some cases, documentation provided corroborative or supplementary information or initial ground for further exploration through other sources and methods. Some documents also provided important and specific details about the process of local implementation of SMEP in the communities and the local contexts.

Most of the documents used in this study were either provided by the key informants (during the scoping visit and the fieldwork) or retrieved from local and virtual public sources.

Other documents were part of the researcher's collection, which were gathered when she was working as a community development practitioner in that region (2012 and 2013).

The documents related to SMEP in a broad sense included official documents produced by BMEC, including the *Mobilization Plan* and the booklet *Families, engage in the school life of your children* (Ministry of Education, n.d.), as well as other materials and slides for presentations. I retrieved most of them from the SMEP website (<http://mse.mec.gov.br/>) and blog (<http://familiaeducadora.blogspot.com/>), but also gathered those supplied by the BMEC delegates and Gaia Social, especially the official reports of SMEP activities from 2008 to 2011.

Regarding the local implementation of SMEP in the cases, documentation included: reports of SMEP-related activities and management tools elaborated by Gaia Social; records elaborated and kept by social mobilizers, local SMEP Committees and the MSE (including pictures, materials used in SMEP actions, agenda and minutes of meetings); attendance list of SMEP workshops and major events; and local official documents and municipal laws.

3.2.2 Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews, which is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a predefined set of questions (interview protocol) with the possibility of allowing new ideas to emerge during the interview as a result of what the participant articulates (Kvale, 2007). According to Yin (2015), "although pursuing a consistent line of inquiry the actual stream of questions in a case study interview is more likely to be fluid rather than rigid" (p.110). Based on this perspective, I conducted the interviews more like guided conversations, which allowed me to follow the set of questions, but also to follow routes that strayed a little from the protocol, when I perceived it is worthwhile and appropriate, as suggested by Kvale (2007) and (Yin, 2015).

I conducted face-to-face (58) and phone interviews (5) from July through December

2017. The recruitment strategies varied according to what was most appropriate and convenient for each case, including invitations by phone, social media (WhatsApp and Facebook), e-mail, or face-to-face. I introduced myself as a current academic researcher interested in their experiences with SMEP and referred to my former position, as a member of the NGO Gaia Social staff in the past, to make the access easier. The recruitment information (Appendix A) included a general explanation about the study, issues about confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation, and contact information. Before the interview started, I distributed a document containing more details about the research and participation to each participant, which included their informed consent (Appendix B). I also inquired, before and after the interview, if the participant had any questions or concerns regarding the study or their participation.

The interview sessions were conducted in Portuguese, the first language of the subjects and mine. They ranged between 20 and 90 minutes, depending on the response of the informants. Usually, the longest interviews were those that I conducted by phone with social mobilizers and BMEC representatives. I also conducted some longer interviews face-to-face with social mobilizers that were more actively engaged in leading the SMEP Committees and had more information and willingness to share their experiences in more detail. The shorter interviews were those with social mobilizers that had briefer or less involvement with the implementation of SMEP. There were also two cases where the interviewees were shy or afraid that I could judge their low activism through the interviews, despite my efforts in explaining the purpose of the study and in making them feel comfortable. With the permission of the participants, I audio recorded the interviews and transcribed them later. I took notes before, during, and after the interviews, which also became a source of observational evidence.

3.2.3 Observation

In the study, I used observation as both formal and casual data collection activities (Yin, 2015; Creswell, 2009). In the first one, I developed a protocol (or questions) to guide the assessment of specific information in each single case. In the other one, observation was carried more informally throughout the fieldwork and the experience of the researcher in those places.

I collected observational evidence related to several aspects, including detectable sociodemographic characteristics of the interviewees and the context of each case, which followed some developed protocols. Also, more informally, I was attentive to identify new evidence during the fieldwork, while gathering documents, connecting to key informants, visiting schools and institutions, and conducting interviews. Direct observation, in this way, provided additional indications regarding the reality of local education, local challenges, community dynamics and capacity, political atmosphere, community leadership, motivation and enthusiasm of social mobilizers and MSE, management of SMEP and organization of Committees, power relations, and attitudes toward others.

Moreover, in addition to fostering opportunities for new evidence, observations supported corroboratory and contradictory information from other sources, and in providing substance for further investigation in the interviews and documents. I registered the observational information in field notes (both descriptive and reflective) and incorporated them into analytic memos.

Furthermore, important additional information came from my participant observations conducted previously. According to Yin (2015), participant observation is “an especial mode of observation in which the researcher is not a mere passive observer” (p.115). Instead, she may assume several roles within a fieldwork situation and may participate in the studied actions, for example, by undertaking specific functional activities in the locality, according to the author. In

this study, my participation as a key staff member of the NGO Gaia Social that facilitated and supported the implementation of the SMEP in those communities in 2012 and 2013, brought a unique tone to the research. Although at that time my role was not research-related, my experiences carried additional information about the phenomenon, helped to guide observation, and enabled better interpretation of the local contexts and sources of evidence, perceiving the reality from the viewpoint of an “insider” (Yin, 2015; Maxwell, 2008).

3.3. Data Analysis Strategies

Data analysis and interpretation in qualitative studies involve a process that has several components (Creswell, 2009). It starts by reading through the data gathered from the different sources to make sense of it and, then, selecting and preparing the data for analysis. Next, the researcher conducts different analyses and moves deeper into understanding the data, followed by making choices in representing the data and in interpreting its broader meaning. Rossman (2017) also affirms that the analysis is ongoing in case studies.

In the case of this study I focused my analysis on the four concepts of my framework (which became my main analytical themes) and the appointment of some emergent themes. Such an approach is referred to by Rossman and Rallis (2016) as *categorical*, because it is focused on specificities of the reality, as opposed to a *holistic* approach where the researcher conducts a broader analysis of the case.

The analysis followed two major procedures. First, I developed a within-case analysis (A) of each of the six target communities. After, I conducted a cross-case (B) analysis by comparing the cases (see *Figure 5*). The within-case analysis aimed at identifying and understanding the most prominent factors influencing leadership activism in SMEP in each community, positively and negatively. The cross-case synthesis, through the identification of patterns, similarities, and

differences between the cases, allowed a further investigation of the relationship of SMEP leadership activism with each of the four main concepts of this study. Such analysis also enabled the identification of relationships between the independent variables themselves.

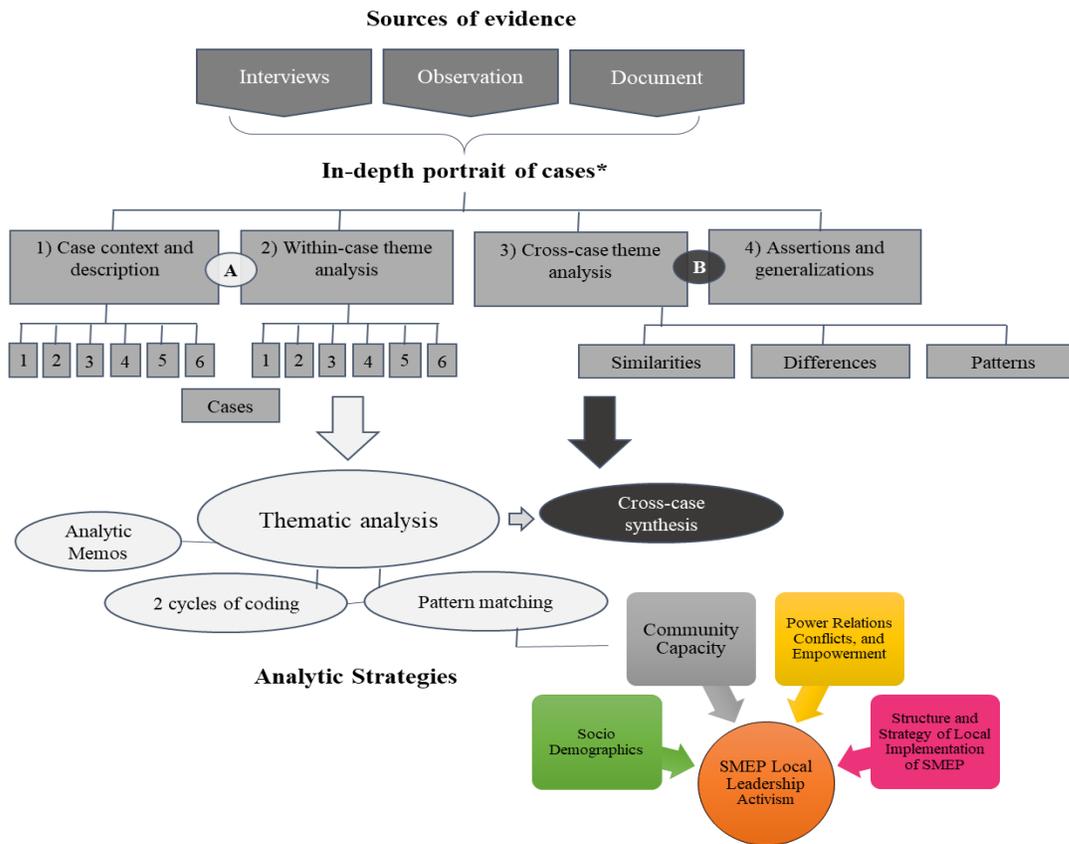


Figure 5. The strategy of analysis used in the study.

**The representation of the in-depth portrait of cases was adapted by Creswell (2013, p.218).*

I used the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as my main method to analyze each case. For the within-case analysis, I applied two cycles of coding (Saldaña, 2009) in the data sets (interview transcripts, field notes, and contents of documents) referencing to the local implementation of SMEP. The second cycle of coding aimed at combining the initial codes into broader ones. The codes were generated inductively, while their subsequent aggregation into categories and themes was done deductively by also using the technique of *pattern matching logic* (Yin, 2015). Such a technique “compares an empirically-based pattern – that is, one based

on the findings from your case study – with a predicted one made before you collected your data (or with several alternative predictions)” (Yin, 2015, p.143). In this research, I employed this technique by transforming the independent variables (**Table 1**) into categories in the thematic analysis. The themes were, then, those that represent the conceptual framework set for this study. However, the deductive approach also allowed for the emergence of patterns other than the conceptual framework, which I ended up classifying into new categories and themes.

Besides identifying factors affecting the activism of social mobilizers, the analysis of the data sets also provided evidence regarding the local implementation of SMEP and the context in which it took place in each community. For understanding the context and framing the description of each case, I focused on data related to three main aspects: the socio-political contexts of the communities, the characteristics of the local implementation of SMEP, and general socio-demographics and educational attributes of each place (secondary data). In general, those contextual components supported the analysis and interpretation of findings within and across cases. Moreover, in several times, they informed the very status of some independent variables in that case (especially related to strategies used for the local implementation of SMEP, political situations and power, and some aspects of community capacity). Also, they were key for the cross-case analysis and synthesis, by portraying specific scenarios that I could compare in the search of patterns, differences, and similarities across the cases to make assertions. Finally, the examination of the local political contexts also brought great insights regarding the relationships between the independent variables.

For the cross-case analysis, I analyzed the findings of each of the four main themes (representing the four concepts or groups of independent variables) across the six cases separately. Within each theme, I compared the factors that emerged in the within-case analysis

(including categories and subcategories) across the communities, looking for similarities, discrepancies, and patterns, and kept registering what I found. I also incorporated more information from secondary data, my notes, and analytic memos I developed during and after the fieldwork, to complete the analysis and interpretation of the findings of each theme. Likewise, I analyzed some descriptive findings and secondary data related to the contexts of each community and compared them in relation to the engagement of social mobilizers, to find new correlations or insights about the factors that have already emerged. Finally, when aspects of certain independent variable were not clear or did not emerge in the within-case analysis, I used my conceptual and theoretical frameworks to guide the investigation regarding whether they had any relationship with the leadership activism for SMEP. From there, I developed the synthesis with assertions and generalizations for each theme (conceptual group of variables) and research question, and some relationships I also found across them.

3.3.1. Details of the Thematic Analysis

In this study, I applied the approach proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) for the thematic analysis, which is “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p.79). Through the thematic analysis, researchers move from a broad reading of a dataset towards identifying patterns of meaning across it that provides an answer to the research questions (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Patterns are recognized through a process that involves familiarization with the data, coding the data, and developing and revising themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although these are steps to follow, the analysis is typically a recursive process (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For the thematic analysis, I applied Saldaña (2009) and Miles et al.’s (2013) approach of coding to the data segments (interview transcripts, field notes, and contents of documents) per

pattern, category, and theme developed, followed by the creation of analytic memos and the formulation of assertions and propositions. I applied two cycles of coding. In the first one, I utilized an *open coding* technique (Emerson et al., 2011) for identifying ideas and issues, whereas, in the second, I operated a *focused coding* for refining the analysis of topics that are of particular interest (Emerson et al., 2011).

For running the within-case analysis, I analyzed and interpreted the data sets (interview transcripts, field notes, and content of documents) of each of the six cases individually. The *thematic analysis* had three focus. The first one was on gathering information regarding the local context and the implementation of SMEP. The second aimed at identifying factors influencing the engagement of the social mobilizers positively. The third focus was of identifying factors influencing the engagement of the social mobilizers negatively. In *Figure 6*, I detail the steps of the analytic strategy I employed for each community.

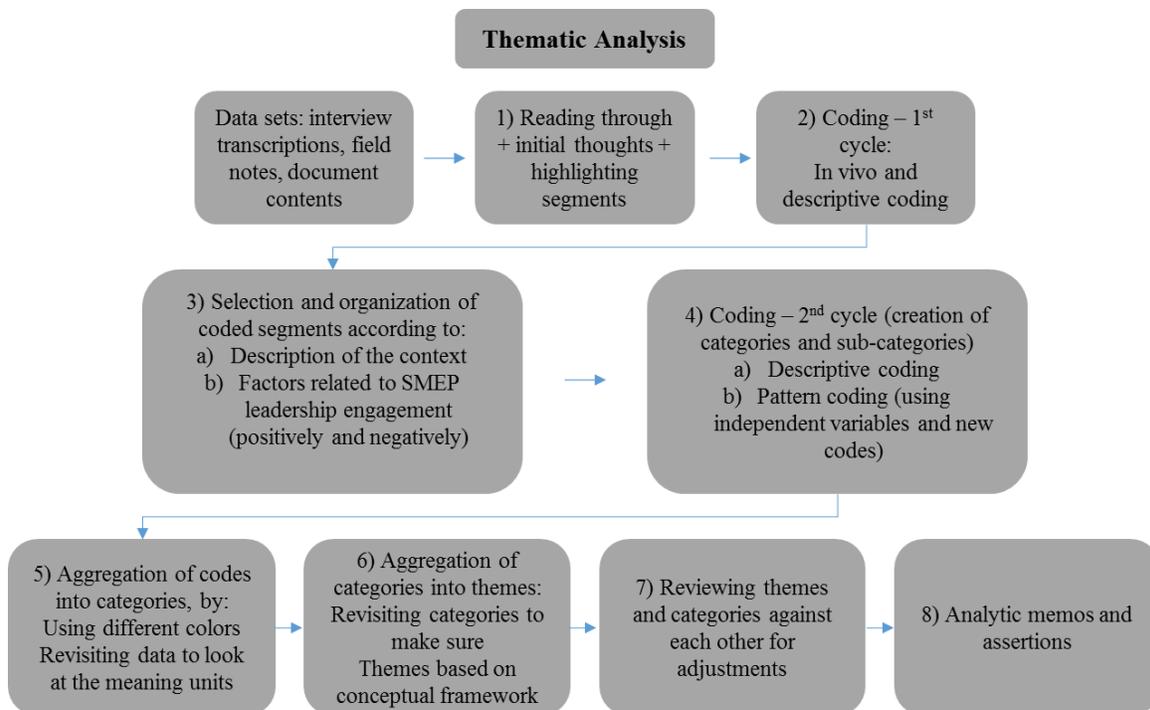


Figure 6. The detailed analytic strategy applied, based on thematic analysis and the technique of pattern matching.

I initially coded the appealing segments of information (data) inductively by using *in vivo* or *descriptive* codes (Saldaña, 2009) for the three analytical focus (local context, positive factors, and negative factors), which resulted in the generation of three separate sets of codes that were treated distinctly in the next steps. For the set of codes regarding the local context, I just kept aggregating them into broader descriptive codes and, then, into categories and themes, based on general topics of my analytical focus (power relations, community capacity, and aspects of the local implementation of SMEP).

The other two sets of codes, related to factors influencing the SMEP leadership engagement positively or negatively, also went through a second cycle of coding. In this cycle, I aggregated the initial codes into broader ones that I called sub-categories, still inductively. From there, I classified the sub-categories within larger categories, applying the technique of *pattern matching*. Through this technique, I created the categories based on the set of independent variables that I have previously defined within the conceptual framework of this study (see **Table 1**) and matched the codes (sub-categories) to them, in a deductive approach. Finally, I combined the categories into themes that correspond to those four of the conceptual framework of this study (sociodemographics, community capacity, power relations, and structure and strategy of local implementation).

The analysis also allowed the natural emergence of codes that did not fit that initial conceptual framework. In this case, I kept combining them into new categories and themes inductively, as they represented other key factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers.

The analytic memos that I developed for making sense of the data in several points of the research also supported the processes in the thematic analysis. I developed memos after interview sessions, during the observations in the field, after the closure of the visit to each

community, while transcribing the interviews, and during the coding and cross-case analysis.

3.4. Managing the data during the analysis

I transcribed the interviews by listening to the records and typing them in Microsoft Word documents, keeping its original language: Portuguese. To reduce bias and another level of interpretation, I conducted the analysis of the interview transcripts, field notes, and content of documents entirely in Portuguese and translated the final codes (subcategories and categories) and findings into English. I coded the interviews with a number and listed them in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I uploaded the groups of transcripts of each community on MaxQDA and used the software for conducting my initial cycle of coding. Then, I exported the coded segments and the list of codes generated from the initial analysis to Microsoft Excel, where I ran the second cycle of coding and the generation of subcategories and categories, which I, in turn, grouped within themes.

I coded the fieldnotes and documents manually. Then, I added the initial codes to those that resulted from the interviews in the Excel spreadsheet. In this way, they were also incorporated in the second cycle of coding and the following steps of the thematic analysis. Finally, to avoid another level of interpretation of the statements of the participants, I translated the codes into English only at the stage of the creation of categories. I also kept the registered evidence, such as excerpts from the interviews, on the Excel sheets.

I also organized the data and the descriptive findings regarding the socio-political contexts and the implementation of SMEP of each community in a specific Excel spreadsheet for the description of the cases. That enhanced the visualization of the different aspects of each case, making their comparison easier and facilitating the use of the contextual evidence to support the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

For the cross-case analysis, I isolated the themes and findings related to each concept (or group of independent variables) that emerged in each case and compared them across the communities to find patterns, similarities, and differences. I also used information about the context of each case to enrich and interpret the overall findings and the relationships among independent variables. I kept registering the findings for each theme separately, creating syntheses that supported the development of the final assertions and generalizations.

3.5. Data interpretation strategy

I interpreted the data through a constant effort of understanding and integrating issues, contexts, patterns, and connections, also in dialogue with available related literature and grounded on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of this research. The interpretation occurred in dialectics between the data, the methodology, the methods of data analysis, the literature, and the researcher.

According to Trent and Cho (2014), several authors support the notion of the researcher self as an instrument. In this perspective, the researcher interpretative process combines *sensibility*, that is “the ability to observe and ascertain nuances”, with *schema*, which is “a deep understanding or cognitive framework of the phenomena under study” (p. 644). Barret (2007) describes the researcher role as “transformations” at multiple points throughout the inquiry process, which also involve “interpreting what the data means and relate the interpretations to others sources of insights of the phenomenon, including findings from related research, conceptual literature and common experience”(as cited in Trent and Cho, 2014, p. 644). In this way, “data analysis and interpretation are always intertwined and relies upon researcher’s logic, artistry, imagination, clarity, and knowledge of the field of study” (p.644).

Furthermore, I utilized selected interpretation techniques proposed by Mills (2007) in this

study. One is *extending the analysis*, in which I asked additional questions about the study, such as: ‘the data appears to show x , but could it be otherwise?’. Another one is *connecting findings with personal experience*. I based my interpretations also upon my experience in conducting the research, my intimate knowledge of the context, observed actions and attitudes of individuals, and outliers. The other two consist of *contextualizing the findings in the literature* and *turning to theory*, which means an “analytical and interpretative framework that helps the researcher makes sense of what is going on in the social setting being studied” (p. 650). Finally, I considered the six essential concepts in the interpretative analysis advocated by Trent and Cho (2014): *Transparency, Reflexivity, Analysis, Validity, Evidence, and Literature*.

4. Confidentiality, privacy, and ethics

As aforementioned, I submitted this research proposal, procedures and the data collection instruments for IRB review and approval prior to the fieldwork. In the field, I always sought to proceed courteously and respectfully, by cooperating and inquiring about convenient time and place for interviews, and by informing them about the purpose of the research. I obtained informed consent from all interview participants and took time to provide more information (written and verbal) about the study and their participation, before each interview. I also explained that the participants could refuse to answer any question and end their participation at any time. Fortunately, no participant expressed a willingness to withdraw the study.

I also followed careful procedures to ensure confidentiality for the participants. Only the research team of this study had access to any information collected through the interviews and participant observation that might lead directly to the identification of subjects. I protected and secured any identifying information with a password. Also, I did not associate the subjects’ names with data and presented evidence. Moreover, I collected identifying information of the

participants (names, phone number, and address) only for recruitment and follow-up purposes, if necessary. I removed all this information for analysis and safely stored it. I also associated code numbers to each interview and used pseudonyms for reference to specific interviews when needed and secured the list.

5. Validity

According to Given (2008), there are no global qualitative criteria for validity. The qualitative research literature mainly discuss validity as “credibility,” “authenticity,” and “trustworthiness” (Seale, 1999; Given, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2012). In this study, I used several strategies for increasing the accuracy of findings and assuring trustworthiness of the study, following suggestions by Creswell (2009) and Maxwell (2012). Those included reflexivity, comparison, peer debriefing and feedback, thick description, quasi-statistics, triangulation, and prolonged time in the field.

During this study, I constantly tried to exercise reflexivity as a way of self-analysis and critical reflection regarding possible bias and disruptions during the fieldwork, aiming at acknowledging their existence and diminishing their effects. In some cases, I registered my perceptions as memos. Reflexivity had an important role in this study for dealing with research bias and participants’ reactivity. In the case of bias, as I cannot eliminate my previous experiences, values, and preconceptions cannot (Maxwell, 2012; Trent & Cho, 2014), reflexivity took the form of an ongoing examination of myself as a researcher and of my relationship with the research. I tried to be attentive to how my background and conceptual baggage could be influencing the conduction and the conclusions of the study, as suggested by Trent & Cho (2014). Likewise, reflexivity was also important for understanding how I might be influencing the subjects’ responses and helped me find and adjust my conduct and research protocols in the

fieldwork. For example, I was very aware of my behavior as an interviewer. It allowed me to adjust my tone and comments in the sessions and to be more careful and attentive in the next sessions, avoiding leading or judgmental comments, for instance. It also helped me to adjust and to amplify interview questions according to the circumstances and subjects, and to perceive subjects' behaviors, attitudes, and disputes with other informants, which I transformed into observational data. Reflexivity also refined my look as an observer in the field, which resulted in looking at other aspects of the context that I did not consider significant before.

Another strategy for enhancing validity was the multiple case study methodology, which brought three strengths to this research. The first one was the investigation of the issue in several localities, allowing the identification of a greater range of factors affecting participation. The comparison among sites also contributed to elucidate some aspects about how the local context and community dynamics relates to social participation in SMEP, including as an interdependent dynamic. Also, several authors defend that comparative case studies can produce more generalizable knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Mills & Wiebe, 2010; Maxwell, 2012; Goodrick, 2014), including about causal questions, such as “how and why particular programmes or policies work or fail to work” (Goodrick, 2014, p.1), which is exactly the case of SMEP and is valuable for informing recommendations for future planning.

Moreover, another strategy I used was to get constant feedback and critical review and discussion about the study with my two advisors, as well as inputs from the three other members of my Ph.D. Committee. I also used some *thick description*, by providing detailed information and inclusion of descriptions of the context, verbatim transcripts of interviews, and several perspectives on a theme, as suggested by Creswell (2009) and Maxwell (2012), when appropriate and feasible. Also, as suggested by Maxwell (2012), I added simple numerical results obtained

from data (quasi-statistics) for identifying the amount of evidence that supported conclusions.

Another essential strategy I utilized was the triangulation of methods and data sources (Seale, 1999; Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2012). Triangulation was important in this study in several ways. First, it allowed the gathering of additional and complementary data. Second, it embraced a multiplicity of perceptions, as elucidated by Seale (1999). Third, it informed about the generality of the explanations, as defended by Maxwell (2012). Finally, triangulation aimed at reducing the risk of bias and associations to a specific method of data collection and analysis or a specific participant or group of participants. The triangulation of sources allowed the identification contradictory and confirmation of information among sources, including among the different informants of the same community. I tried to sharpen my perceptions to observe when participants were omitting pieces of information, trying to show an inaccurate portrait of reality and occurrences (more positive than it actually was, for instance), or presenting different or conflicting perspectives from others (also as an indication of power relations among players and of self-advocacy), by talking to different individuals and exercising reflexivity,.

Finally, prolonged time in the field was possible because of my previous experience as a community development worker in those communities, which also put me in the position of an *insider* participant researcher (Lofland & Lofland, 2006). The contributions to validity from this opportunity included: easier access to people, documents, and information; better understanding of the local context; familiarity with the culture, dynamics, rules, and institutions; development of tacit knowledge; more observational information and experience about the local implementation of SMEP; and being trusted by the participants.

On the other hand, being a known investigator can be a source of participants' reactivity. Although I could not control for reactivity, I used the several strategies already pointed out to

enhance validity. Another one that I consider very important was my “openness to the participants.” In the recruitment procedures and at the beginning of each interview section, I clarified about my new role as a researcher, the purpose and objectives of the study, and that I was interested in their overall perceptions, experiences, opinions, and information about the implementation of SMEP. I tried to be as candid as possible, also in explaining that the research was not judgmental and that the honest statements of each participant were the most valuable thing for the study, including to give them voice while still preserving their identities.

6. Reliability

Given (2008) states that reliability is usually associated with terms such as “credibility,” “dependability,” “confirmability,” and “consistency” in qualitative studies, because of the plurality of paradigmatic and methodological approaches. In this study, I consider reliability as dependability and quality of the procedures and analyses, which support the rigor of qualitative research (Given, 2008).

To enhance the reliability in this study, I used a combination of strategies, including two suggested by Given (2008, p.2): *methodological coherence* (the appropriate and consistent collection, analysis, and interpretation of data) and *audit trails* (a transparent description of all procedures and issues relative to the research project). The others include ensuring consistency through the data collection and analysis, developing coherent conceptual and theoretical frameworks, conducting the research ethically, and executing a small pilot study.

Once the researcher herself is also considered an instrument in qualitative studies (Trend & Cho, 2014), it is recommended that strategies be employed to reduce bias for enhancing the dependability and the quality of the study. In this way, one strength of this study relies on giving a detailed and transparent description of all procedures and on being honest about possible issues

relative to this research project. I also applied methodological coherence and rigor, by carefully creating a strong research design. I carefully selected the cases to maximize the contribution of the findings and developed a meticulous case study protocol for guiding all the steps of the research project. I developed protocols for the different methods for guidance and the enhancement of consistency in data collection and analysis.

Another strength regarding the reliability of this study refers to the development of its conceptual framework. I chose the issues, themes, and variables investigated based on my previous experience, literature review and theoretical framework, and an exploratory scoping visit carried out in the communities in June 2015. At that occasion, I had the opportunity to talk with several SMEP social mobilizers, MSEs, and representatives of the SMEP management team in the BMEC. Such a visit allowed some insights regarding tensions in SMEP and the social participation in its context, as well as the gathering of important documents and information for analysis, and the establishment of partnerships at the local and the national levels for conducting this study.

Another contribution towards the enhancement of the reliability was the opportunity I had to carry out a small pilot study between February and April 2016 focused on a three-level analysis of power relations and empowerment in the context of SMEP and two communities of the EHR. According to Van Teijlingen & Vanora (2001), pilot studies, which are understood as small versions of full-scale studies, can be very helpful in pre-testing particular methods, allowing new insights to the researcher, and identifying possible issues.

In the fieldwork, to avoid possible research bias or inaccuracy of findings related to the research procedures, I tried to apply strategies including : avoiding leading questions, being attentive to listen to the participants' meanings, using open-ended and probing questions that

allowed the participants to reveal their perspectives, and continuously attempting to learn how the participants made sense of what was going on. I also took notes constantly.

Moreover, to enhance reliability in terms of consistency in the analysis, I followed and adapted specific approaches for reference, such as Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, Miles et al's (2013) application of coding, and Yin's (2015) pattern matching. I also tried to be consistent and prudent throughout the coding process, by following a coding book based on the operationalization of variables to make sure of not shifting the meaning of codes during the process (Creswell, 2009) and by often cross-checking codes and categories developed in the analysis of the different communities against each other.

Finally, I interpreted the data by dialoguing with available related literature and being grounded on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of this research. The interpretation was held in a dialectics between the data, the methodology, the methods of data analysis, the researcher, and the literature (Trent and Cho, 2014). In sum, as suggested by Trend and Cho (2014), I intended to enhance the quality of this research through rigor, transparency, analysis, evidence, literature, reflexivity, validity, and consistency.

7. Previous experience of the investigator with the cases

One unique and crucial aspect of this study is having myself at the position of the principal investigator. One of my main interests in the cases of this study relates to my previous professional experience in supporting the implementation of SMEP in the twelve municipalities of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region (EHR), between 2012 and 2013. As a community development practitioner, integrating the management staff of the Brazilian NGO Gaia Social, I was immersed in that setting for almost three years. In the context of SMEP, through my leadership position in the NGO, I was responsible for planning and managing the strategies and

the team that provided support for the implementation of the Plan in those communities. Some of my main tasks involved making the bridge between BMEC and the communities – through the MDE; supporting the organization of SMEP formative workshops in partnership with BMEC and MDEs; developing a regional forum for continuing education of social mobilizers; and planning and performing other educational practices aimed at supporting and encouraging the action of social mobilizers, including visits, feedback, lectures, and technical assistance. I was also responsible for writing reports for GAIA Social and for orienting the team in supporting and monitoring what was going on in SMEP in the towns.

My previous experience with SMEP and the communities of the EHR, my current position as an "insider" participant researcher (Lofland & Lofland, 2006), and my values and personal interest add particularities, strengths and limitations to this study, which had to be recognized, embraced, and managed. The almost three years of work in those communities, especially in the area of education, and the particular nature of my professional practice of supporting and encouraging the implementation of the SMEP influenced my perceptions about the policy and impacted the ways I initially framed SMEP. They naturally led me to develop a positive perception of such a policy. For instance, I perceived that the enthusiasm of seeing ordinary people taking leadership positions, people being excited for to get to know others, and the opportunity for the whole community to o work together (even if just verbally) for the collective well-being, among others, distracted my perception from being more analytical and critical at the beginning.

However, when I had the opportunity of stepping outside this context, I started to realize contradictions and other aspects that have amplified my critical perception. Reviewing literature and studying democratic, community, and power theories were crucial for me to take that jump.

Although little research has been conducted on SMEP, its foundations have been the target of several critiques. Becoming critically aware of such critiques was also a remarkable and a liberating process (Freire, 1980) to me, as a citizen and as a professional, and have boosted my interest in exploring the tensions and issues in the context of SMEP more deeply.

Finally, returning to the communities for the fieldwork, now with the eyes of a researcher and also with new views regarding SMEP, also allowed me to revisit perceptions regarding the local implementation of SMEP and the meaning it had or still has for the residents and people involved in those contexts. Old perceptions (positive and negative) were alive again – especially regarding the local reality and challenges to a good quality public education, community capacity and dynamics, and leadership and power structures – also elucidating and bringing to the table issues that corroborated or opposed the critiques developed about SMEP. The analytic lenses also led me to new insights about those settings, allowing myself to investigate issues differently and to be open to new understandings.

In this way, my unique contribution to this study comes as a result of my personal, professional, and intellectual processes of experiencing SMEP and the inherent tensions of the cases. Transiting from a community development practitioner to a researcher, and the process of being immersed in the local context, then stepping outside it, to finally revisiting it, helped me develop critical reflection and analysis regarding SMEP and its local implementation. I can characterize such processes as *praxis*, in Freire's (1980) conceptions, which is the action and reflection of the individual upon the contextualized issue to transform it.

Moreover, being in the position of an “insider” researcher added strength to this study in several ways. First, it allowed me to have more access to the field, documents, and informants, as mentioned before. Second, the study also benefited from the prolonged experience and time I

spent in the context of the cases, which represented more opportunities for observation (in this case, also in different periods), and the development of tacit knowledge and trust among the researcher and participants of the study. Having developed tacit knowledge and familiarization and a better understanding of the context was shown very useful to me during the fieldwork. For instance, having previous notions about the operation of the public educational system locally and its connection and regulation by the state and national governments, really helped me to understand processes, programs, challenges, and issues pointed out by the participants during the interviews better and were also important for interpreting some observations and analysis. Moreover, I also noticed that my familiarity with local cultural aspects and slangs were essential for communicating with participants better and for understanding and interpreting the meanings, intentions, and attitudes the informants were conveying.

On the other hand, being a known investigator can be a source of participants' reactivity. My previous professional relationship and experience with those that I had or not the opportunity to work previously might have influenced their behavior or responses. Moreover, it may also contribute to making distinctions between the investigator's former and new roles in those settings more difficult. Also, the researcher was a "known" investigator to only some of the participants, and this might have influenced differences in the reactions and responses between those whom she had met before and those whom she has not. Maxwell (2012) argues that reactivity will also be present in interview settings: "what the informant says is always a function of the interviewer and the interview situation" (p.91).

Although I cannot control for reactivity, I used some strategies to enhance the credibility and accuracy of findings in this study, as presented. The first one was openness with participants. In the recruitment procedures and at the beginning of each interview section, I tried to clarify

about my new role as a researcher, the purpose and objectives of the study, and that I was interested in their overall perceptions, experiences, opinions, and information about the implementation of SMEP. I explained that, independently of our previous relationship, I was expecting to learn from their experiences, which are very valuable for contributing to a critical analysis of the policy and that may inform future recommendations. Also, during some interview sessions, I felt the need to make clear that there was no right or wrong answer, but only an opportunity for giving voice to their individual and collective experiences and opinions.

This approach seemed to be very valuable in handling situations during the fieldwork because I noticed that sometimes the participants came to the interviews thinking that they would be participating in an evaluation of the local implementation of the SMEP or even about their particular involvement. In other cases, some interviewees were hesitant because they could not recall events and details of their participation in SMEP activities in the past and expressed fear of not making a valuable contribution to the study. Finally, I also perceived that, after using this approach, individuals seemed to understand my position as a researcher better. One evidence is that social mobilizers and MSE have not asked for my support to cope with local educational issues, as had happened during the scoping visit that I carried out two years before.

8. Limitations

This study also presents limitations, especially related to the research scope. For instance, the investigated cases were all part of a specific region in Brazil, so the application of the findings to other contexts that are much distinct than that (for example, in the case of bigger cities and richer regions) may be limited. Moreover, I focused this study primarily on the first level of the local implementation of SMEP, related to the tensions and issues affecting the engagement of local leaders who were expected to perform actions of informing and engaging

the community, families, and schools. Because of that, I selected the social mobilizers as the main informants of this study. However, I did not collect the perspectives of other stakeholders directly involved in the context of SMEP – such as students, parents, educators, other community residents and leaders, mayors and other public actors – as primary data, except when they were identified as social mobilizers by the purposeful sampling processes during the fieldwork. Related to that, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study have focused on and limited the analysis of SMEP to some aspects and themes. Finally, because it was not the emphasis of this study, I did not make evaluations regarding the success and effectiveness of the policy regarding the improvement of the quality of public education, for example.

Other limitations refer to distinct aspects. For instance, cultural factors might have affected the implementation of SMEP but could not be assessed through this study. The same way, I did not investigate the frames of the social mobilizers (and other social actors) regarding SMEP, the local education issues' causes and solutions, and regarding the role of others, in more depth. Finally, because the fieldwork was conducted five years later, the initial implementation of SMEP in those communities and the record and evaluation of activities were not a practice of local Committees and MDE, I could not access some information about the activities developed in the context of SMEP and details about its implementation. However, this might not impact the findings and quality of this study, once it does not focus on the description of the cases but the impressions, perceptions, and opinions of the main informants regarding issues and tensions, also in dialogue with the literature available regarding SMEP and its political foundations.

In the next chapter, I will present the particularities of the implementation of SMEP in the communities of the EHR, as well as the role of the most important stakeholders. I believe that telling this story will allow the reader to have a better comprehension of the overall process and

will provide more elements that are important to understand and interpret the context and the findings of the within-case analysis.

CHAPTER V – The implementation of SMEP in the Estreito Hydroelectric Region (EHR)

O que esses municípios fizeram com a mobilização social foi muito além do que o Ministério esperava. Eles se uniram, vestiram a camisa, e foram para as ruas fazendo um bonito espetáculo de cidadania.

[What these municipalities did with social mobilization was far beyond what the Ministry expected. They got together, put on their shirt, and went out to the streets doing a beautiful show of citizenship.]

Sergio Maia, BMEC representative

After presenting the methodology and methods that I applied for this study, and before digging into the findings of each case, I felt the need to contextualize the particularities of the process of the implementation of SMEP in the EHR, to which all the communities were submitted. Describing this process and the roles of the main social actors involved (Gaia Social, BMEC, MDE, and social mobilizers) is the purpose of this chapter. Such a context provides further information that supported decisions regarding sampling, site selection and construction of the cases, and the selection of independent variables specific to the strategies and structure of the local implementation of SMEP. It also supports the analysis of factors affecting activism within and across cases, which is the main purpose of this study.

I will present the process of the implementation of SMEP through the roles of the main stakeholders, which I believe is important for giving more foundation to the analyses and the upcoming assertions and recommendations. I will also present the key milestones of the implementation process. I grounded the descriptions on data collected through my participant observation, the interviews with key informants, and the analysis of available documents, especially Gaia Social's reports and project management files, as well as records of the local

SMEP Committees.

1. Introduction

The communities of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region have both similarities and differences regarding implementing SMEP. The main similarities start by and may also result from being submitted to the same process for the initial implementation of the program, which was facilitated by the NGO Gaia Social and BMEC in the region. Except for the town of Estreito, all the eleven communities were introduced to SMEP and started their implementation in February 2012, concurrently. Gaia Social had a significant role in organizing and facilitating the process of the implementation of SMEP during the first two years, along with the MDE of each community. The MDE turned out to be the core leader and supporter of the program locally, especially after the NGO left the region in 2014. The differences in SMEP among the communities may have resulted from the strategies adopted and decisions made by the local leadership of the program, as well as the particularities of the cultural, social, and political contexts of each location.

All cases received the same treatment, mostly led by Gaia Social. Initially, the NGO consulted each of the local government authority in education – the Municipal Secretaries of Education (MSE) – regarding their interest in the implementation of SMEP. They all were enthusiastic and supported the project. Then, endorsed by BMEC, Gaia Social invited representatives of the different communities to the same regional workshops and events for training social mobilizers, including the SMEP National Meeting. The NGO conducted follow up visits and calls to all the groups of social mobilizers within the same period (March 2012 - November 2013), and used the same approach to encourage them to develop local actions (e.g.: creation of the committee and municipal laws, elaboration and execution of a plan of action,

commemorative events, mobilization marches, and community educational projects, among others). Gaia Social also stimulated and coordinated the social mobilizers of the neighboring communities to participate and to support each other's activities and events.

Although the treatment from the external agents (Gaia Social and BMEC) were alike in the different cases, the local leadership developed for SMEP became responsible for taking ownership of its implementation and making decisions regarding its structure and strategies in each community. The local SMEP's leadership was composed of trained social mobilizers and members of the SMEP Committee settled in each community, which often included the MSE, technicians of the MDE, and school teachers and managers, as I could verify. Each local government was also accountable for providing whatever financial support needed for the development of SMEP activities, without federal or state funding. The autonomy of the communities was reflected in variations in how the program was conducted in the cases, although the social mobilizers of the different localities inspired each other through their experiences, ideas, and actions.

2. The implementation of SMEP and the role of Gaia Social

Gaia Social is a Brazilian NGO, whose headquarters are in Southern Brazil. The NGO started their work in the EHR in 2010, hired by the corporate consortium responsible for the hydroelectric enterprise, and had a central function managing and implementing projects for regional development. The regional development work involved five broad fields, including Education, Public Health, Social Work, Sanitation, and Economic Development. In the educational area, Gaia Social executed several projects, including the development of leadership for problem-solving, project design, and fundraising; the installation of community-owned rural libraries in remote localities and churches; and the implementation of SMEP. Several social

mobilizers and other community members participated in those.

Additionally, Gaia Social was accountable for managing the projects and results of the other NGOs that were also working for the consortium with the goal of strengthening the management and the quality of local public education. Their projects involved a community-based literacy project, professional development training and technical assistance for managers and technicians of the MDE and public schools, consultancy for accessing national programs and funding, enhancement of municipal councils, and implementation of community gardens and health-nutrition programs at schools. This collaborative work also focused on developing community leadership and enhancing social participation and governance of public education.

The Brazilian NGO Comunidade Educativa CEDAC led a critical project for the EHR, aiming at gathering the 12 communities for the creation of a regional *Education Development Arrangement* (EDA), based on a national policy developed at that time. The idea was to gather neighboring small towns, which are likely to experience similar challenges in public education, into an institutional corporation. Such institutions should identify the needs of the communities they represent and be run by their collaborative efforts, with the goal of having stronger voice and power to negotiate and be assisted by the federal government.

Aiming at empowering the communities and promoting the development of the region, Gaia Social supported the efforts of CEDAC and other NGOs by also facilitating the integration of their projects and programs and public policies. Gaia Social coordinated the collaboration between projects and stimulated the municipalities to work together and to support each other. Because of that, several of the residents that were acting as the local coordinators of the NGO projects also became involved with SMEP as social mobilizers. Besides, the NGOs usually asked the social mobilizers to support and participate in their educational programs in the communities.

In general, from my perception, the work of the NGOs offered opportunities for professional and leadership development to the communities and for accessing governmental programs and policies. It also achieved results for several local needs momentarily and brought motivation for social participation, especially when the projects were ongoing. However, after the NGOs left the region, several endeavors were not sustained, such as the establishment of the EDA and the school gardens. Other efforts, such as SMEP, also varied along the EHR.

The involvement of Gaia Social with SMEP started at the beginning of 2012, when the NGO realized that the communities of the EHR could benefit from such a policy. From then on, Gaia Social helped to introduce, organize, and shape the implementation of SMEP in that region. *Figure 7* illustrates the main events that marked SMEP endeavors in the EHR. Gaia Social played several vital roles, including being the intermediary institution between BMEC and the communities. The NGO arranged SMEP formative events and mobilized the communities and local government officials to attend and support them. Also, the NGO facilitated and helped the organization of the social mobilizers and the local SMEP committees for the purpose of developing activities, collaborating, and taking agency and ownership of the program. Gaia Social also became a significant source of motivation and encouragement to the local leadership of SMEP.

Moreover, during its work, Gaia Social influenced government officials (MSEs and mayors) to support SMEP formative events and activities. The NGO also helped the MDEs to frame the kind of audience for the workshops and formative events that trained the social mobilizers. In addition, to BMEC, BMEC, Gaia Social was a great partner, helping to arrange the formative events (workshops and meetings), to organize the local government officials and social mobilizers, and to follow-up and report local SMEP activities. Gaia Social was a focal point for

communication and crucial for local leadership development and the encouragement of social mobilizers.

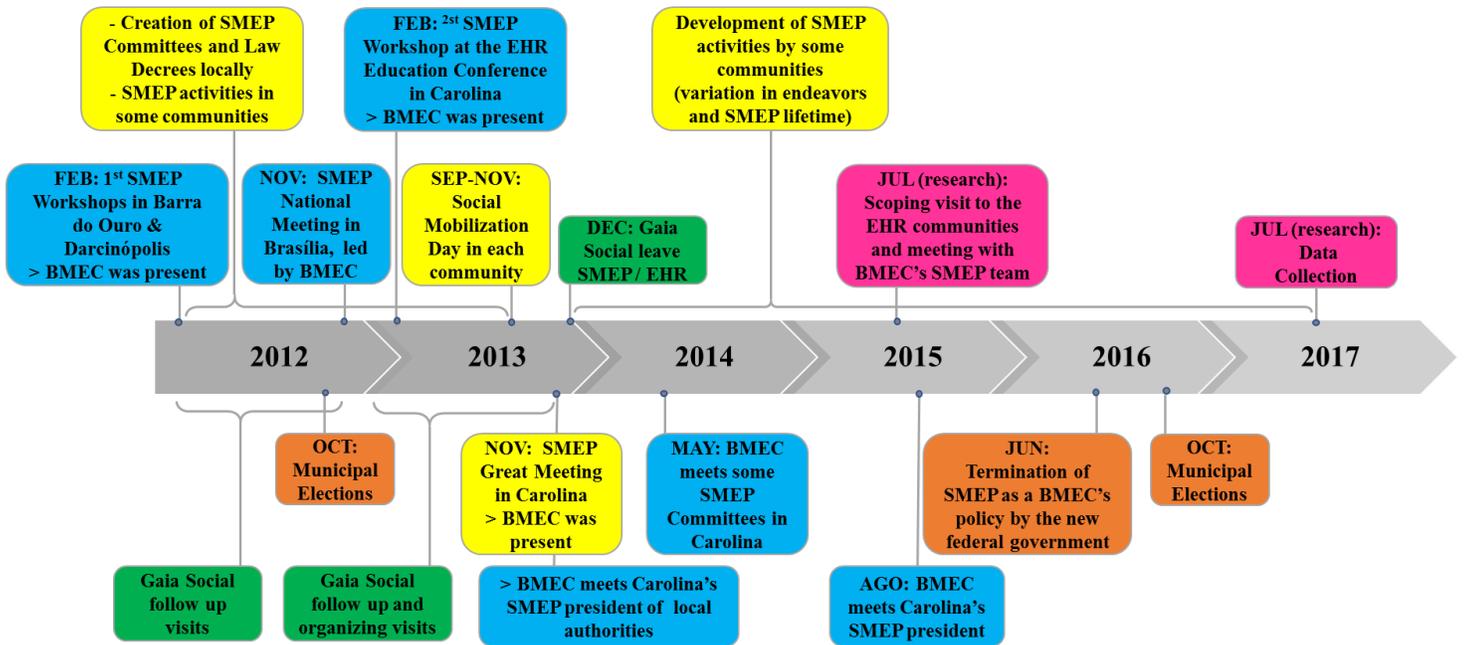


Figure 7. Timeline of the implementation and the development of SMEP activities in the EHR.

2.1. The year 2012

After introducing SMEP to the MSEs and obtaining their support at the beginning of 2012, Gaia Social coordinated with BMEC's SMEP team the organization of two workshops in the region. Based on SMEP's proposal, Gaia Social advised the MSE of each community in the composition of a list of invitees, including individuals from different social fields, organizations, and government programs. The NGO also supported the mobilization of the public for attending the SMEP workshops, which ended up forming a total of one hundred social mobilizers from the twelve towns. At the end of the workshops, the social mobilizers were oriented to develop an action plan to be carried out in their communities.

In the months following the workshops, the NGO followed up with the SMEP leaders and visited each community for the purpose of keeping track of their activities. Gaia Social

agents detected that the great majority of the towns were taking little action. The communities were also under the turmoil of the municipal elections' year. Therefore, during the visits to each locality, the NGO agents encouraged the creation of a local SMEP Committee and the execution of any activity from the action plan that they developed in the workshop. The NGO also met the MSEs to stimulate more institutional support and activity for SMEP. Finally, Gaia Social arranged the distribution of the booklet *Engage in the school life of your children* (Ministry of Education, n.d.), donated by BMEC, which were used by the social mobilizers in lectures and meetings for presenting SMEP to the community in general, local authorities, and other players in education.

In the second half of the year, BMEC contacted Gaia Social to offer funding for lodging and food for two social mobilizers of each community to attend the *VI National Meeting of Social Mobilization for Education Leaders* (SMEP National Meeting), an event they were organizing in Brasília – the national capital. Gaia Social obtained funding from the hydroelectric Consortium for the ground transportation and coordinated the trip. As a result, nineteen social mobilizers from ten communities attended the event in December 2012. The actors participated in national discussions and had the opportunity to interact and share experiences with social mobilizers from other regions of the country. At the occasion, Gaia Social also arranged with BMEC the development of another SMEP workshop in the EHR for the following year to strengthen the implementation of activities as a new government was taking office.

2.2. The year of 2013

The year 2013 was crucial for the communities of the EHR. It was marked by the beginning of the term of new public governors and personnel and the end of the activities of the NGOs. Because Gaia Social also leaving the region at the end of that year, the NGO

concentrated its efforts on fostering the sustainability of the initiated projects, including SMEP.

Thus, in February 2013, Gaia Social organized the *1st EHR Education Conference* in Carolina, aiming at preventing the loss of support from the local government to the efforts and achievements of the past, at that transitional time. Gaia Social articulated the support of the former and new MSE and the social mobilizers of each community for the event and the mobilization of participants. The MDEs also provided funding for food, lodging, and transportation of the attendees. As a result, eighty individuals from eleven municipalities (earlier social mobilizers, local authorities, former and current MSEs, technicians of the MDE, school principals and teachers, municipal councils' members, reading agents, representatives of churches and community organizations) attended the two-day event led by the NGO with the presence of another representative of the BMEC's SMEP team.

Through the event, Gaia Social aimed at building capacity for public education in the communities by stimulating local and regional partnerships between social mobilizers and institutions and the discussion and planning of integrated actions. The NGO also intended to facilitate and to encourage the local government and organizations to take ownership of the projects and actions initiated previously, reducing their dependence on external agents, especially the NGOs. Towards that, besides forming new social mobilizers, Gaia Social attempted to use the event to strengthen the local SMEP Committees and ensure the commitment of the new local government and actors to support them and their actions. The instructor gave tips for the organization of the local SMEP Committees and stressed the availability of supporting materials, websites, and tools provided by BMEC for the implementation of SMEP activities.

During the event, the social mobilizers and partners of each community came together,

deliberated, and started the elaboration of an action plan for SMEP for 2013. The groups also initiated the next steps towards the empowerment of the EDA and the continuity of the formulation of the *Municipal Plans of Education* (MPE) by the MSE and MDE teams, which could integrate SMEP actions. The participants elected the leaders of the SMEP committees of four communities to compose a *SMEP Organizing Board*, which would help in connecting individuals and actions from the different localities. The players also planned other actions, such as the creation of regional meetings of SMEP Committees, an annual Educational Forum for the EHR, and a *Facebook* page and a website, where all could share, discuss, and plan activities.

However, in the following months, as the NGO could see, they did not follow through with any of those actions except the development of the MPEs, which was mandatory in the Brazilian System of Education. The development of SMEP was also slow in several communities and variations in the activism of social mobilizers and local committees were already observed. In August, because of the low activism and under the request of the social mobilizers, Gaia Social decided to resume the work with the local leadership of SMEP for organizing the rescue of SMEP activities in the EHR.

For two months, the NGO held several local and regional meetings with the social mobilizers and SMEP committees for encouraging their collective action. Gaia Social used the strategy of organizing the communities in four groups, based on their location. This was done to facilitate a SMEP event in each locality, with the support of the neighboring towns. As a result, the actors of each place planned and developed events celebrating the *Social Mobilization Day* (SMEP Day) in their towns, between August and November 2013. The events were a success and had high participation from their communities. The activities carried out in the municipalities consisted primarily of civic marches with posters claiming for greater family

participation in the school life, and with a subsequent reunion of the participants in public squares or multisport gyms for lectures, games, raffles, and students' cultural presentations.

The local committees were responsible for carrying out each event, with the attendance and support of social mobilizers from the same county. This isn't quite clear. The committees also insisted that their local authorities work towards the formal recognition of SME resulted in the creation of law decrees for the *Social Mobilization Day or Week* in several municipalities.

Another significant achievement of the SMEP committees was the development of *The Great Meeting of Social Mobilizers* on November 29th, in Carolina. The event was a shared desire of the social mobilizers and with the facilitation of Gaia Social served to reunite and organize them. Although the support of Gaia Social existed, the social mobilizers were the ones who took care of all the arrangements for the event, with the institutional and financial support of the MSEs and mayors. The event reunited hundreds of people, social mobilizers and partners from different social fields, including citizens, students, educators, public managers and servants, and authorities from all the EHR municipalities. It also had the participation of the same inspiring BMEC representative who delivered the 1st SMEP workshops in the region in 2012.

The event provided to the local SMEP committees the opportunity of sharing their work and showing commitment for the continuity of SMEP. The importance of the engagement of the family in the school life, the collaboration between the community, parents and the school, as well as the valorization of the regional culture were the main themes of the event, which also featured artistic performances by students from all the communities. The event also aimed at encouraging the communities to plan the next steps regarding the improvement of their local education and marked the withdrawal of Gaia Social from the territory publicly.

It is important to mention that during the process of facilitating the implementation of

SMEP in the EHR, Gaia Social ended up developing a regional leader for the program (and other community involvement activities), with no previous intention of doing that. At that time, the Gaia Social agent most engaged with SMEP operations was a resident from Carolina, who was contracted by the NGO to work as a project assistant and community mobilizer to work in several projects. This agent worked closely with the communities, being the one who usually was interacting, meeting, and organizing the social mobilizers, SMEP committees, Municipal Secretaries and local authorities, and MDE technicians. The agent was also present in all the major SMEP events developed for and by the social mobilizers in 2012 and 2013, with an active, confident, and motivating participation. The agent played several essential roles in the implementation of SMEP in the EHR and became a great source of encouragement and support for the social mobilizers and local SMEP Committees, as they mentioned. The agent ceased her active involvement with SMEP implementation when her contract terminated at the end of 2013.

Based on the positive experience of having a regional facilitator (Gaia Social), during his visit for *the Great Meeting*, the BMEC representative suggested the appointment of the SMEP Committee of Carolina as a regional leader, which would become a focal point for follow up, communication, and support to the activities of the social mobilizers from the different communities. BMEC, then, reunited with the president of the committee and local authorities of Carolina (including the mayor and the MSE) to articulate their support for leading that strategy.

2.3. The years of 2014 and following

At the beginning of May of the following year, 2014, the BMEC delegate returned to the EHR and organized a meeting in Carolina with members of the 12 local SMEP Committees for following up his strategy of a regional leader and reinforcing the importance of the agency of local committees. The participants were able to share experiences and received guidance and

suggestions from the government representative.

However, according to the social mobilizers interviewed for this study, the regional strategy proposed by BMEC ended up not working, mainly because of the shortage of the financial resources needed for carrying out out-of-town meetings and visits and of a loss of interaction between social mobilizers over time. The posture and disconnection of the president of the SMEP of Carolina was another issue. Finally, evidence shows that political divergences and disputes were another cause, reflecting less support from the public managers to the actions.

After that, BMEC had little communication with the EHR communities. A consultant of BMEC tried to contact social mobilizers of the region in 2014, for the purpose of obtaining information for a national report of SMEP endeavors and results, but only two communities (Babaçulândia and Filadélfia) sent their information. In August 2015, the same BMEC agent visited the president of the SMEP Committee in Carolina and figured out that his strategy had failed. No contact was made after that, not even for informing the communities on the end of SMEP by the new federal government.

After Gaia Social left the region, marking the end the process of a shared implementation of SMEP, little report or follow-up of the SMEP activities developed by the communities took place. I collected most of the information regarding social mobilizers' activities carried out after that period through the interviews and few documents provided by the participants in the scoping visit (2015) and the data collection fieldwork (2017). I found that several communities ended their official SMEP activities in 2013 or 2014, while few persisted in developing them further.

In general, the communities had little or no interaction with the social mobilizers of other municipalities since May 2014, except by rare opportunities of continuing education provided by the state or federal government. Very few attended the activities of other towns, and most of the

interviewees were curious to know about how the other municipalities were doing. Finally, none of the actors that I interviewed knew about the termination of SMEP inside the BMEC, which the new federal government decreed in 2016.

3. Social mobilizers and variations in the local SMEP Committee

The social mobilizers in this study are those community residents that were actively involved in the implementation and execution of SMEP activities, regardless of their membership on the local SMEP Committees or attendance at the formative workshops delivered by BMEC. Several individuals participated actively in carrying out activities and events without being necessarily involved in the committee. Also, I found that the committees were often composed of trained social mobilizers, but not necessarily. Some individuals were appointed as a committee member by local authorities even with no previous involvement with SMEP events. Many social mobilizers did not attend the SMEP workshops but were trained or instructed by other mobilizers, who were peers or superiors.

In general, in the EHR, individuals became social mobilizers in their communities by three main means. One, by being appointed or invited to attend the SMEP workshops at the initial implementation of the program. Two, by being appointed or chosen to become a member of the local SMEP Committee, or by participating and getting engaged in carrying out SMEP activities along its development.

The conventional way of becoming a social mobilizer or a leader of SMEP in the EHR was through the participation in one of the workshops delivered in 2012 and 2013 in the region. The MSE and leaders inside the MDE, along with Gaia Social, led the invitations and indications for the participation in those events. The local government of each municipality funded their attendees' transportation, so the participation was limited to just a few peoples. Also, because of

that, the attendance of residents of the host towns and the nearest communities was higher. However, in the workshops, the participants were urged to train others back in their towns. Also, because opportunities for training and professional development are rare in the region, especially if delivered by BMEC, the SMEP workshops attracted other people, including college students and professionals in the fields of education and social work.

Numerous participants of the workshops ended up not becoming social mobilizers. The reasons are multiple and beyond the scope of this study; however, I could identify a few. One is that some attendees were not interested in engaging, but rather in learning something new, obtaining extra credits, or improving their resume. Also, other participants were summoned by their superiors to participate but did not have much interest in following through the mobilization activities. Additionally, the municipal elections followed the development of the first workshops, resulting in changes in public servants' positions and tasks, which may have affected the activism of those participants representing governmental agencies, positions, and programs at the events.

Alternatively, I also identified several reasons why individuals ended up becoming active social mobilizers. Some (often public servants) were delegated or summoned by their superiors to do so. Usually they were in work positions or job tasks that could facilitate the implementation of SMEP. They could also be chosen for better representing a social field, institution, program, or public figure (political trust). Others got invited or involved because of their previous engagement in community service or organizing or because of their experience in the field of education. Also, some social mobilizers volunteered or were nominated due to their personality or passion and commitment to education and their communities.

BMEC encouraged the organization of social mobilizers and partners in local committees

for the leadership of SMEP. According to BMEC, the committees should represent a community organization accountable for spreading, planning, managing, and developing SMEP. They should also mobilize citizens and establish partnerships with other institutions and social actors.

In the EHR, the organization of social mobilizers in local SMEP Committees varied along the communities. In some places, social mobilizers carried out the SMEP endeavors more independently, while in others the committees were strong and an important agent in leading SMEP. Some committees developed a more horizontal and shared leadership, in others the leadership was more centralized. Some committees were more active and organized than others, including in terms of planning. Finally, some had more cohesion among members.

Also, in some cases, social mobilizers were more active and organized when working together for SMEP inside their regular institutions (such as schools, public departments, or churches) than when working as members of a specific committee for SMEP. Finally, during the interviews, I also found cases where social mobilizers were developing several approaches and activities disconnectedly from each other, and their efforts were not acknowledged by others.

Moreover, the creation and structure of the local SMEP committees also varied in the EHR. Some committees were established in 2012, while others resulted from the efforts and events developed in 2013. In a few communities, the committees were created by municipal law decrees. In some towns, the decision making regarding its composition was more democratic, being deliberated and decided by social mobilizers and partners in specific meetings. In others, the MSE or mayor nominated the members, usually appointing individuals based on their political alignment, work position, and experience in the area. Those appointed usually attended the SMEP workshops, but not necessarily. Generally, the committees were influenced by the MSEs and mayors, being affected by local politics and power disputes, directly or indirectly.

The representativeness of the different social fields, institutions, and social groups in the SMEP Committees also varied in the EHR. Generally, the leaders of committees were public servants working in the field of education, usually in important or leadership positions at the MDE. The MSE was the president of the committee in some communities. The leadership of the committee was accountable for making decisions, managing and implementing SMEP, as well as for inviting, organizing, and motivating other members and social mobilizers for action. Members and partners usually had less responsibility for SMEP and often included public servants in the fields of education, social work and public health – including other Municipal Secretaries, as well as representatives of municipal councils and of different churches, managers of public schools, parents, participants of community organizations, among others.

In general, besides the big events presented, the social mobilizers developed some other activities in their communities. Ones with more frequency than others. Some involved a greater of actors, organizations, and impact than others. Some communities kept developing specific activities in the SMEP Day or Week, while in others the activities were more integrated with the school strategies and routines, or to other programs. In some cases, SMEP was carried out through exclusive activities, while in others, they were paired with the ongoing practices of institutions and social actors.

4. The role of the MDE and the MSE

The Municipal Department of Education (MDE) of each community, led by the MSE and some coordinators, played two very significant roles in the implementation of SMEP in the EHR: institutional and financial support. In general, those roles also resulted in a higher centralization of the local leadership of SMEP in the MDE and education experts, at the expense of greater involvement of the civil society in deciding, planning, and executing the mobilization activities.

Several factors nurtured such conditions. Those include the very strategies created by BMEC for managing and implementing SMEP locally, the MDE as a government agency of local authority on education inside the Brazilian Education System, and the local culture and power structure. I will discuss these following and later in the next chapters of this study.

According to the strategy of BMEC, the MDE of a locality should request the implementation of SMEP to the Ministry, demonstrating their commitment, so they could send a delegate to deliver the initial workshops. Also, the MDE is the institution that manages and is accountable for the public schools, public educational programs and policies, and the local public servants in the field. Therefore, the MDE also contributed to the implementation of SMEP by allowing the development of its activities inside the schools, involving the students, parents and families, teachers, principals, and staff. The MDE also fostered the openness of the schools to the dialogue and a greater involvement of the families and the society. All of these contributed to making the MDE central for the local implementation of SMEP in the EHR. I also found the cultural issue of respecting the authority of public officials significant. The population usually acknowledges the MSE as the most powerful person in the educational field. That arouses respect, greed, and opposition in those working in other public positions and influences their involvement. For instance, to avoid conflict or to pay respect, public servants rarely would oppose their superiors publicly or take the lead, including in the case of SMEP. At the same time, the MSE had the power of taking out those with political dissent out of the picture. That was especially important for the towns where the local leadership and decision-making of SMEP became highly centralized in the MSE.

Some MDE coordinators and the MSE had a strong influence in creating the leadership team for SMEP. First, they helped to designate, to invite, and to mobilize participants for the

SMEP workshops, aimed at forming social mobilizers. Second, they often indicated members for the committee and its leadership, who could also be switched after the municipal elections. Finally, MDE coordinators and the MSE also summoned education public servants to participate and team up with social mobilizers for carrying out SMEP events in the schools and communities. As a result, professionals working under the umbrella of the MDE were the ones most involved in leading or executing SMEP activities. In this scenario, the local SMEP committees were linked to the MDE, with variations among the communities regarding their centralization and subordination to the decision-making of the MSE.

Furthermore, there were attempts at incorporating SMEP in the activities and routines of the MDE. There are cases where SMEP activities became part of the professional routines of schools and public servants acting in diverse positions, including teaching. In other cases, SMEP was incorporated as a stand-alone program inside the MDE. In others, SMEP was integrated into specific government policies, programs, and projects inside the MDE and public schools. Also, in some places, the MDE included SMEP activities in their agenda as commemorative events and projects in the annual school calendar. In others, they influenced the creation of law decrees for formalizing the local committees and SMEP Day in the municipality. Finally, SMEP activities were also used in collaboration with projects of public service from other fields, through partnerships developed with other Municipal Departments and councils.

Besides the institutional support, the local financial support was also crucial for SMEP, as BMEC did not provide any funding towards the local implementation of SMEP. Because of that, funding afforded by the MDE or the City Hall became very important to the social mobilizers and local SMEP committees in the EHR. It also tied the development of SMEP activities and events to the goodwill of government officials, especially the MSE and the mayor.

While Gaia Social was working in the region, the NGO was able to negotiate with them for funding and support for the formative events and the social mobilizers' endeavors. However, with the withdrawal of the organization, the local financial support for SMEP became vulnerable to the political disputes and political discontinuity in the government of the communities.

5. Similarities and differences

Although the communities of the EHR shared the described process for the leadership development and initial implementation of SMEP, the decisions made by the local leaders and government officials when taking local ownership of SMEP resulted in similarities and differences in the program among the communities. Those are reflected in the features, strategies, themes, audience, and the frequency of SMEP activities developed in each case. As previously mentioned, one can see variations in the social mobilizers' organization, the operation of local SMEP Committees, the creation of municipal laws, as well as in the local institutional support received and the involvement of local authorities in decision-making and activities related to SMEP. Finally, there are differences in the active engagement of social mobilizers as well as in the lifetime of the program in each community, which are aspects that can also be used for measuring and comparing the success of the implementation of SMEP in those cases.

What I find very intriguing in the case of the EHR is why the program was more successful in some communities than in others. What factors influenced the active engagement of social mobilizers in those settings? Why did some local leaders of SMEP succumb to the phenomenon of demobilization, while others thrived in leading the activities?

In this scenario, other components may also have contributed for shaping SMEP's implementation and its similarities and variations in the towns of the EHR, such as the features of the communities. As part of the same region, the communities share many similarities.

However, they also differ in several other aspects, including socio and economic elements, community capacity, local power structure, the local socio-political context, among others.

In sum, the combination of having the same guidance for leading SMEP, autonomy to make decisions regarding its activities locally, and structural commonalities and differences among the communities influenced and helped to shape the phenomenon of the implementation of SMEP in the EHR and the way individuals experienced it in each locality. It also influenced the activism of social mobilizers, which is the focus of this study. Thus, investigating the characteristics and the experiences of each community and factors influencing the engagement of social mobilizers in implementing SMEP is key to understanding those questions. In the next chapter I will explore these issues through the analysis of the experience of each community. In the chapter following that, I will turn, then, to their analytical comparison.

CHAPTER VI - Description of the cases and findings of the within-case analysis regarding SMEP leadership activism

Porque eu disse: eu vou fazer a diferença, eu vou levar a mobilização...Eu gostava de ver acontecer, de ver a diferença, de ver a mudança.

[Because I said, I will make a difference, I will lead the mobilization... I would like to see it happen, to see the difference, to see the change.]

Lucilvania, social mobilizer, Goiatins

In the last chapter, I explored the process of implementing SMEP in the EHR and the roles of the primary actors involved. That overview provided context for the choice of some of the independent variables of this study. It also supported the analysis of factors affecting the engagement of the social mobilizers within and across the communities.

In the current chapter, I present the findings of the within-case analysis, through which I investigated each community individually as the first analytical procedure in the comparative-case methodology of this study. For each community, I will provide a brief description of the cases, intertwined with the main factors I found influencing the activism of SMEP local leaders. I will also present a final comparative table (**Table 4**) that summarizes the information from all six communities. As a further step, I will compare the findings of those communities in a cross-case analysis (as a second analytical procedure), whose results I will present in Chapter VII. To begin, I will inform about the presentation of the findings in the next section, followed by the narratives and the comparative table.

1. The presentation of the findings

For each case, I compiled the findings into distinct tables (**Table 11** to **Table 28**), representing factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively and negatively.

They are located in **Appendix D** of this dissertation and will be discussed in the narratives of each community throughout this chapter. In these tables, in addition to providing the findings that emerged from the thematic analysis, I have also included the sociodemographic characteristics that I found significant to the activism of those social mobilizers interviewed. For that analysis, I identified the main patterns within each variable (gender, age, marital status, education attainment, religion, employment status, and field of work) among the social mobilizers of each community and interpreted them regarding their influence on the engagement of those leaders, by also taking into consideration other aspects of the context and their correlation with other variables. However, the relationship of the sociodemographic characteristics of the individuals with their engagement became more apparent only after the cross-case analysis, which I will discuss in the following two chapters.

Finally, I organized the descriptive findings related to the characteristics of the local contexts separately, which I summarized in **Table 4**. I will also discuss the most relevant contextual aspects throughout the narratives of each community. The contextualization of the cases includes three main elements: the socio-political contexts of the communities, the characteristics of the local implementation of SMEP, and general sociodemographic and educational attributes.

The first element informed about the socio-political context influencing the implementation of SMEP, local partnerships between institutions and individuals, and across social fields, as well as perceptions of the participants concerning community capacity and agency. As for the second element, I explored facts associated with the local implementation of SMEP in each community, including aspects of the structure and strategies used, which characterize some independent variables investigated in this study.

For the third element, I gathered secondary data from different sources (IBGE, 2003, 2015, 2017; PNUD, IDHM, 2010). Those provided complementary information about the sociodemographics and other attributes of the communities, such as area, population, year of foundation, poverty rate, HDI, adult illiteracy rate, number of state and municipal schools and students, and the IDEB (which is a Brazilian indicator of the quality of elementary education). That information not only provided background regarding the local conditions of each setting in which SMEP was implemented but enriched the subsequent comparison of the cases and interpretation of the findings. They also complemented the data regarding the perceptions of the participants about the challenges faced by their local education.

Table 4 compiles the most relevant contextual aspects and findings of positive and negative factors influencing the engagement of social mobilizers in each community. Finally, I have provided the full overview of the sociodemographic characteristics of the social mobilizers interviewed for this study in **Appendix D**. They also reflect a portrayal of the local leadership for SMEP within and across the cases.

In the next section, I will present a narrative for each community, by exploring some central aspects regarding its socio-political context and the local implementation of SMEP, woven with the main findings related to factors influencing the engagement of social mobilizers positively or negatively.

2. Findings of each case

2.2. Darcinópolis

Darcinópolis is a small and welcoming city. Although it is located along one of the longest and most dangerous highways in the country, it is tranquil and cozy. After a few rides around the town, one will see it is very flat and squarely organized. The municipality is also the

only one in this study that doesn't have a river beach. I was always delighted by the residents of Darcinópolis, who usually are smiling and very curious. They also enjoy talking and sharing homemade food, to the point that visitors can easily be invited for a meal in their house, at any time and become a new friend.

However, Darcinópolis also is a place full of dualities. For instance, most of the people seem very supportive of others, at the same time some interviewees revealed that child abuse within families and public institutions is still surreptitiously present. Poverty is not easily observed in an in-person visit, but it is strongly evident in the statements of the interviewees and secondary data. Poverty can also be perceived through the interaction with the young students of the municipal school. I remember one day that I saw the 7-year-olds at the school entrance very excited about a new circus that had just arrived in town. But when I asked, they said they couldn't attend the show because their family couldn't afford the ticket – which was relatively cheap. After that episode, I discovered that most of the students' families were receiving financial support from the federal government's cash transfer program called “Bolsa Família” at that time.

Darcinópolis is the second youngest town in this study and the fourth in size and population - about 5.8k residents (IBGE, 2015). It also is the most rural community among the six, with 67% of its residents concentrated in the countryside (IBGE 2015). The municipality holds the second-worst HDI – 0.581 (PNUD, IDHM, 2010) – among the cases, and its poverty rate of 42.82% (IBGE, 2013) is highly concentrated in the rural areas. Poverty is an issue pointed out by the participants of this study as a factor impacting the quality of local education, as well as the lack of parental involvement in school life and the student behavior. Moreover, the main school is urban, which makes access and transportation difficult for rural families, affecting their

participation in the activities the school promotes.

Darcinópolis, along with Barra do Ouro, hosted the first SMEP formative workshop, which allowed a high attendance of local individuals in that initial training. Representatives of Darcinópolis also attended the other enhancement events promoted by BMEC and Gaia Social; however, this did not mean that those who participated became active social mobilizers or involved with SMEP activities afterward, as I discussed in the previous chapter.

There were only a few official SMEP activities developed by the social mobilizers for the community in Darcinópolis, and they ceased at the end of 2013 (which is also when Gaia Social left the region). The activities involved a meeting for the public presentation of SMEP and the creation of the first SMEP Committee in 2012 supported by the MSE and the mayor, and the distribution of the SMEP booklet. In 2013, the new mayor nominated new members for the committee and the social mobilizers implemented a big community event for the SMEP Day, stimulated by Gaia Social. The social mobilizers also participated in the Great Meeting in Carolina and the SMEP events of three neighboring towns. At the same time, throughout the years, the personnel of the main school (including several social mobilizers) developed various internal activities to attract the partnership and participation of the families without linking those actions to the official SMEP program. Still, those who implemented these actions recognized them as activities of social mobilization. In further analysis, I identified that the disconnection between the formal SMEP program and the mobilizing activities developed by the school reflected the lack of collaboration and communication among players due to political differences.

In Darcinópolis, SMEP was officially carried out by the SMEP Committee, which was very centralized in the MDE and the MSE, despite the partnership with other MDs and municipal councils. Although individuals from various social fields and churches were invited or

nominated to be part of the committee in the document, the active social mobilizers were usually public servants in the area of education working at the schools or MDE. The position and field of work were important variables, to the point that the engagement of the social mobilizers usually ended when they changed jobs or areas. By interviewing the participants and observing, I found this situation was related to the local understanding of SMEP as a program owned by the MDE, under the responsibility of the MSE. Also, I found that public servants and officials had concerns about respecting the boundaries between social fields (and institutions) and hierarchies in the government when leading activities of public benefit. As a result, the social mobilizers seemed either to not recognize that SMEP activities could be managed by any citizen (regardless of job position or area) or did not want to create disagreement by taking the initiative and appearing disrespectful to the MSE. This brought a political connotation to SMEP regarding who should or could be ruling it in the town.

From there, it became clear that power relations and local politics heavily influenced the implementation of SMEP and its leadership in Darcinópolis. I also found that the political differences among players and the centralization of the committee in the MSE became the main villains to the continued activism of social mobilizers in 2013 and the following years. In this context, a new political party, opponents to the previous one, assumed leadership of the local government in 2013 after the municipal elections. This impacted SMEP activities, its leadership, and the activism of social mobilizers in several ways.

In April 2013, the new mayor decreed a law for the creation of the SMEP Committee by nominating ten members representing the educational field and churches and including the new MSE as the president. To some interviewees, this was an intervention to dismiss political opponent members from the committee that had already been created democratically the year

before. Although I did not find any document with the first nomination of members to compare, this likely was one of the means by which several social mobilizers were disengaged from the leadership of the program because of politics. Another way, more indirect, was through job rotation. In this phenomenon, the new officials command public servants to switch job posts, based on political affinities, which ended up affecting the involvement of social mobilizers and separating the activities promoted by the MDE and the schools. In this context, several social mobilizers linked to the former administration felt they lost room and autonomy in conducting SMEP actions after 2013, as expressed by one of the former leaders of the program, “when you are politically opposite you feel that you cannot do much because she [the MSE] believes that you want to take her position in the administration.”

Furthermore, I could identify disputes between players in the context of SMEP, including the two MSEs (of 2012 and 2013) and some social mobilizers and the new MSE (of 2013), which hindered the leadership activism for SMEP. The triangulation of methods, my previous experience in the region, and hearing the perspective of different key informants helped me to recognize and interpret some aspects between the lines in this case. Some participants complained that the leadership of SMEP weakened with the new administration and pointed out deficiencies in the behavior of the new MSE (leader of the SMEP Committee). They recognized the new leader as being “isolated” and “negative,” and with a “low self-esteem” and “no initiative and autonomy,” especially when compared with the former MSE, who was a source of motivation to the social mobilizers because of her commitment, support, and activism. Also, two very active leaders of SMEP expressed losing motivation because of the lack of autonomy and encouragement provided by the new MSE, as revealed by participant V:

Everything that I used to do, she [former MSE] endorsed and supported, she let it

open for us to work and do the actions, she always made me free. However, when it changed the MSE, she let me a little tied in. And we started to lose the sparkle of the social mobilization and our enthusiasm.

On the other hand, the new MSE, declared that the lack of initiative of the members of the committee was one factor that slowed down the activities of SMEP in the municipality. I could perceive the connotations of power disputes and political differences of both sides permeating their speeches and leading them to collaborate less. I also noticed that there is was cohesive group of public servants in education in the municipality who work very well together and take turns in the public titles. Those included social mobilizers that were very active at the beginning, but that ended up disconnecting from SMEP because of the political changes. I later found that this group was the one that kept leading the activities for engaging the families in the main school, independent of the MDE and SMEP.

The love and commitment of the social mobilizers, especially this group, to improving local education emerged as a factor that strongly motivated their engagement and became the fifth theme in this study. Moreover, their activism was moved by the need for bringing the families to become partners with the school. Also, their strong teamwork fueled their engagement.

The social mobilizers, in general, were also motivated by experiencing the power of the individual and collective engagement for the betterment of their communities, touching the areas of democratic participation and community capacity. They were enthusiastic about nurturing a mass collaboration in their community, feeling good about individuals working together, and collectively thinking of solutions to common problems. At the same time, the usual “passivity” of the community was also mentioned as hindering their eagerness to keep engaged.

All the participants perceived the Darcinópolis as more passive regarding solving their problems or doing work for the public good. I found that sporadic fundraising and donations were organized by a group of friends to help those in need. Still, I could not identify any other social project or action, community organization, or venue for continuous social interaction, except by the churches. Additional spaces for social interaction are commemorative festivities developed by the local government and schools.

I believe that the low community agency explains why the social mobilizers got excited about the involvement of their local community in the SMEP Day. The event had good participation of the families and support from different social actors, reuniting the community on the streets, in a movement that was a novelty to them. The implementation of SMEP activities also allowed the social mobilizers to interact and work with new people, developing new ties within and outside their community, which highly motivated them.

In this context, I found that churches (faith-based organizations) – and particularly the Catholic – played an important role in providing social and emotional support in the community and of developing local leadership, which also influenced SMEP. I noticed that the previous leadership experience and the engagement of several social mobilizers in the social actions promoted by the Catholic Church contributed to their involvement as leaders of SMEP. They reported having developed valuable experiences through the church that helped them to act as a leader in mobilizing and helping the community.

Likewise, I found that the participation of the social mobilizers in other programs and formative events promoted by the external NGOs in the region was essential for developing their leadership skills. Also, their participation in the SMEP workshops and events, as well as the support from the NGO Gaia Social, were key motivators for the social mobilizers to remain active. All the

participants were enthused by the regional integration of connecting, exchanging experience, and visiting other municipalities.

Gaia Social played a crucial role in Darcinópolis in encouraging the social mobilizers and MSEs to act and keep engaged, as well as in managing political opponents to collaborate and obtaining the institutional support of the local government leaders. In this context, the support of GAIA Social can be understood as the aspect of having an external source or leader that fosters and motivates engagement. Most of the social mobilizers and MSEs indicated the withdrawal of Gaia Social from the region as a factor that hindered the continuity of SMEP activities in the community, which suggests a high dependency on the NGO for action, among other factors.

Finally, all the participants, including the two opposing MSEs, mentioned the lack of interest in education by the new mayor (from 2013 to 2016) and his lack of financial support to the SMEP activities as factors impacting their activism significantly. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of support from the mayor in diverse ways, including by calling him “difficult” or “frozen,” or declaring he had “no interest,” “no knowledge about education,” “no recognition of the importance of social mobilization,” or “destroyed the public patrimony.”

In conclusion, besides the complexity of power relations and disputes in Darcinópolis, the impact of both the lack of local financial resources and the interruption of Gaia Social’s encouragement suggest that the implementation of SMEP activities beyond the school’s walls became dependent on the availability of external resources.

2.2. Babaçulândia

Babaçulândia is one of the most interesting towns among those of this study. It is surrounded by beautiful landscapes, cut by fascinating flat hills and the magnificent flora of the Brazilian Cerrado, full of babassu palms. When you arrive downtown, you will encounter a

mesmerizing body of water. It is part of the big lake resulting from the installation of the hydroelectric power plant in Estreito, MA, which impacted all the twelve communities of the EHR. There is also a beach on the riverside, bars and restaurants, where visitors and locals gather. Because of that and its great location (only 37 miles away from a big city called Araguaína), the town receives many tourists during the weekends and holidays. Some residents also work as boatmen, taking people for rides on the lake. Maybe because of the strong influence of tourism in the local economy, the town has several labor organizations, such as the association of retailers, the association of boatmen, the rural workers' union, and the teachers' union. However, tourism has not been all good for Babaçulândia. According to several interviewees, drug abuse and prostitution among youth and adults has increased considerably in town and became a real concern for the community and the local education.

Compared to the five other communities in this study, Babaçulândia is the third largest in terms of area, population, and numbers of schools and students. It has about 10.7k residents, half of whom live in rural districts (IBGE, 2015). Also, 28.5% of them are illiterate. Among the cases, Babaçulândia holds the lowest poverty rate of 31,74% (IBGE, 2003), and the highest HDI – 0.642(PNUD, 2010), but those still reflect challenges to social wellbeing.

In general, I found factors linked to the structure and the local strategy for implementing SMEP the most meaningful for facilitating the engagement of social mobilizers in Babaçulândia. Those primarily included the development of a robust SMEP Committee, having local institutional and financial support, BMEC's guidance, and municipal laws. Aspects linked to community capacity, such as previous leadership experience, new ties and networks, and the local needs also encouraged activism significantly. On the other hand, the main factors hindering SMEP's leadership activism related to power relations and conflicts and the loss of institutional

and financial support locally, which are related to politics and dependency on the local government.

At the beginning of the SMEP implementation in 2012, Babaçulândia was one of the most committed towns to local public education and its enhancement. I witnessed that education was a public priority, with the full support of the mayor and the active involvement of the MSE. They encouraged the professional development of teachers, principals, and technicians of the MDE by supporting their participation in several workshops and programs offered by the NGOs, the state and federal governments, including the SMEP workshops. I found the support from public leaders, both institutional and financial, was crucial for the implementation of SMEP, the development of its leadership, and the motivation and engagement of social mobilizers.

Consequently, the development of the leadership for SMEP was strong in Babaçulândia, with high participation of the social mobilizers in all the formative workshops and events promoted by BMEC, Gaia Social, and the other municipalities. Representatives of different areas (education, public health, social work, economy) and institutions (including municipal councils, MDs, schools – principals, teachers, parents and students, unions, and churches) attended the first workshop, and some were nominated as members of the SMEP Committee. However, as in Darcinópolis, the nomination did not ensure their involvement in leading SMEP activities.

The committee was created by a municipal law endorsed by the mayor in September 2012, in order to take ownership of implementing SMEP in Babaçulândia. Besides nominating fourteen members representing the community, the decree named four agents of the MDE as the executive board of the committee. Those leaders were the ones who actively commanded the SMEP actions, which resulted in the centralization of the SMEP leadership in the MDE, despite representation of other fields and institutions. In 2013, after the municipal elections, a new

political party assumed the local government and, as in all the other localities of the study, implemented a “job rotation” in the public posts. However, as opposed to what happened in Darcinópolis, the new administration did not alter the members of the SMEP Committee, which remained the same through July 2017 when I collected the data.

The institutionalization of the SMEP Committee by law was crucial for enabling and organizing the development of SMEP activities and the engagement of the social mobilizers. I also found the strong leadership of the committee very significant. The commitment, ownership, and organization of the leaders of the committee guided and motivated the participation of several interviewees and kept SMEP alive for some years. The activities were planned primarily by the president and the secretary of the committee, who have a long-term commitment to public education and enthusiasm for SMEP and community engagement. Also, the president was an acknowledged, active leader in the community, leading several educational and cultural actions, which inspired the engagement of several others.

I found that the community leadership experience and high participation of those leaders in the events and training promoted by BMEC and the NGOs contributed to inform and foster their activism and to create less dependence on Gaia Social. Although those leaders appreciated and missed the support of Gaia Social as external encouragement of their engagement, they were more independent and very knowledgeable about where to find information and to reach out for support to implement SMEP activities. Those leaders also declared that the passion and confidence of the BMEC representative highly inspired their activism. Moreover, the strategy of interacting and developing a network with other towns motivated the engagement of the social mobilizers substantially. The interviewees mentioned that meeting new people, developing new friendships outside the community, and exchanging experience and visiting other municipalities

encouraged their involvement. Finally, according to the president of the committee, there was a desire for Babaçulândia to become a positive educational reference in the EHR, and competition with the other towns boosted their engagement, as he stated,

When we got together, we wanted to be the best ones, you know? When we had [SMEP] activities with other municipalities, we wanted to be better than them! We used to say, “let's be better than Carolina! Than Darcinópolis!” And Carolina did the same thing, “let's show we are best!” And that expectancy was positive.

The board and some members of the committee from the MDE developed ownership of SMEP, supported by BMEC's documents and educational materials. They would meet and plan the actions together, and engage others, usually implementing the activities in partnership with the schools and MDs. The involvement of individuals that worked at the MDE or schools helped them acquire a privileged position

The locally felt needs motivated the group, which used them as themes for the SMEP activities (such as parental involvement, reading habits, environmental conservation, drug abuse). In this sense, the MDE and the SMEP Committee took a step further and implemented local assessments regarding public education and parental involvement in the school life. The results of these assessments and the need to strengthen the family-school relationship drove several mobilizers to engage in improving the local reality. As stated by one them, “what attracted me was the idea that I always had, that the school cannot enhance itself if the families are not interested or participating.” However, the MDE or social mobilizers did not follow-up the assessment to formally check if the parental participation improved with the SMEP activities.

The implementation of SMEP in Babaçulândia took place primarily through campaigns and events, targeting parents and the school community. The committee remained very active

until 2015, when they lost institutional support as I will explain later. In 2012 and 2013, the social mobilizers led a massive distribution and discussion of the SMEP booklet with parents in school meetings and events. In September 2013, the local SMEP Committee and partners, with the support of public managers and authorities, developed a big event in the community to celebrate *SMEP Day*, which also became formalized by municipal law from then on. The local social mobilizers received support from peers from other two neighboring towns, and attended their SMEP events, including the *SMEP Great Meeting* in Carolina.

In 2014, the SMEP Committee implemented two main activities. One was an action developed in each school at the beginning of the year, focused on parents, school principals, and educational policy, while the other one was the second *SMEP Day* in September. I observed that the first action stood out among the cases in the way it attempted to discuss the problems and finding integrated solutions for enhancing social engagement for better education. Through this action, the social mobilizers discussed the local educational indexes for the first time. They also used materials provided by BMEC to make a quick assessment regarding the participation of parents in the school, returning the results to the principals. They also discussed the precepts and strategies of SMEP with the school principals and encouraged the inclusion of these in the Policy Pedagogical Plans (PPP), which is a participative policy that should be constructed by each community to establish the guiding values, focuses, and strategies for the school year.

Through these strategies, besides raising the awareness of parents to participate, the leaders of the SMEP Committee wanted schools to recognize the importance of strengthening the relationship with families and commit to that. The committee wanted school principals and teachers to be held accountable for implementing SMEP-related activities in the schools' routines, as its leaders declared. However, I noticed in the interviews that some school leaders

expected that the committee would keep implementing the SMEP activities, not them. Those different expectations and frames about who should carry out the work have affected the continuity of the program negatively.

Through further investigation, I realized that such a situation was also related to conflicts and power disputes among players. I perceived a certain rivalry between those occupying positions at the MDE and those working at schools in Babaçulândia, which have hindered the collaboration amongst social mobilizers and potential partners to keep implementing SMEP activities. The rivalry seems to be rooted in power relations and political disputes, such as the phenomenon of “job rotation” among public servants and competition for posts, disagreement between new and former governors, and conflicts between the MSE and the teachers’ union.

In September 2014, the local committee joined forces with the Municipal Department of Health and delivered another big event focusing on drug prevention for the SMEP Day. Also, two social mobilizers declared having included strategies of SMEP in the Municipal Plan of Education, which was a new policy created to dictate local guidelines for public education. However, I could not verify the documentary evidence, nor if they put that into practice. That would be, then, the last SMEP action in the community. The committee planned the development of the SMEP Day in 2015 (which is documented) but did not receive the governmental support they needed in terms of human and financial resources for implementing the action, according to the interviewees. In 2016, the committee decided not to plan any action because it was a municipal election year and institutional support was not expected.

That reality reveals that, although the municipal laws for SMEP supported the engagement of social mobilizers, they did not guarantee the implementation of SMEP or the sustainability of the activism in Babaçulândia. The implementation of SMEP activities,

centralized by the local committee, became institutionally and financially dependent on the MSE and, consequently, the City Hall. This influenced what happened in those institutions and their becoming susceptible to politics and variations, frames, and attitudes of the government leaders.

SMEP thrived in the first three years when even political opponents recognized its value. The institutional support from the mayor, MSEs, schools, and other MDs created an encouraging atmosphere for engagement. Since then, the City Hall and MDE went through political and financial challenges, which hindered the development of SMEP activities. For instance, the MSE was changed five times in four years. The social mobilizers declared that the second and the third ones did not acknowledge the importance of SMEP and were not supportive. According to them, there was the perception of "mobilization for education" as a "contentious movement" against the MDE by the new public administrators. Also, I could observe that the administration of that mayor harmed public education in several ways. According of the participants, there was inappropriate management and use of public resources, violating federal guidelines and policies, resulting in a political and economic crisis never faced by the town. This resulted in a shortage of materials, essential classroom supplies and equipment, school buses, and meals. It also worsened the relationship between the government leaders and teachers, who were claiming for better salaries.

Despite those political interferences, all the participants interviewed, including the MSE in charge in 2017, emphasized they wished for the return of the SMEP activities. The challenges in education and local felt needs, the sense of collective, the community leadership, and the social organization existent in Babaçulândia seem to create a predisposition for their engagement.

2.3. Tupiratins

Tupiratins is the most remote community among all those I studied. Until recently, people would have to ride on an unpaved road for two hours to get there. The town is tiny and distributed along the main street. This long street also takes us to the edge of the Tocantins River, from which you can watch a golden sunset and beautiful landscapes tanned by it. From there, we can also see the town of Itapiratins, located right across the river. A sandbank in the middle of the river becomes the main arena for community gathering and celebration in July. Traditionally, during the entire month, residents support each other in building temporary straw lodging to enjoy the river beach and a music festival organized by the local government. Some families even move to that little island on the weekends, while others also seize the opportunity to make extra income by vending food and beverages. Beyond that joyful season, it is not difficult to notice the fellowship, solidarity, and serenity that are present in that community whenever you visit it.

Tupiratins is, by far, the smallest community of this study, with a population of only 2.5k people; almost half of it is considered rural (IBGE, 2016). However, unlike the other cases, the population is less scattered. The local indexes of poverty and HDI are very similar to those of Darcinópolis, rating 42.86% (IBGE, 2003) and 0.587(PNUD, IDHM, 2010), respectively. Likewise, poverty is not easily perceived as in the other town. Still, it carries the second-lowest illiteracy rate – 24.7% (IBGE, 2010), being behind only Carolina. Finally, despite its small size, Tupiratins is the second oldest, as it became a municipality in 1958 (IBGE, 2017).

Tupiratins has the smallest number of students (549) and schools (4) in the study (IBGE, 2015). All participants perceive the town has good public education and are proud of that. According to them, teachers are committed and qualified, and public managers (principals, MSE,

mayor, state governor) provide support. One participant believes that local students perform better than their neighbors, which is justified. The municipal IDEB is one of the highest among the cases of this study and has also increased over the years.

The participants still felt the need for higher participation and support of parents in school life, as in other cases. They faced challenges in keeping the families engaged beyond the SMEP Day. Also, the municipal education budget is small and tight (mainly because a significant part of the money comes from local taxes and the town is tiny), sometimes insufficient for investing in better infrastructure. Several participants also saw that financial shortage as a challenge for the implementation of SMEP activities. However, it did not interrupt their activism. Participants also believed that the importance the community and government gave to education contributed to the successful implementation of SMEP. Love for education also emerged as a predisposition to the engagement of social mobilizers in Tupiratins.

Tupiratins had the most successful implementation of SMEP in this study. The local committee and schools were still carrying out SMEP activities in the community at the time I collected the data (June 2017). They remained active even after the termination of the program by BMEC (June 2016), and in the field. I found out they did not know about that. In 2013, they created a law that guarantees the implementation of SMEP Day every year. Tupiratins also implemented the highest number and diversity of activities under the SMEP umbrella, targeting families, public managers, legislators, schools, seniors, and the general community for collaborating to better education. Besides parental involvement, activities also focused on other purposes and themes, including health, nutrition, and self-care, based on identified local needs. The town also stood out for the high collaboration of social mobilizers and partners from different social fields and local institutions (MDs, churches, councils, schools). For instance,

one-third of the social mobilizers interviewed for this study worked in public health or social work. Finally, also unlike the other cases, the SMEP Committee evaluated its activities and was very organized, especially during the first two years. They developed annual action plans collaboratively and meetings for discussion and kept documents, pictures, and short reports of the activities they developed. The community took ownership of SMEP, especially under the leadership of public servants as social mobilizers and the MDE – which centralized the committee. Despite political discontinuity, the local government always supported SMEP. There was also high participation of the community in the activities.

I found several aspects contributing to the implementation of SMEP and its leadership activism in Tupiratins. Among those, the most significant regards community capacity, agency, and the local engagement and support for SMEP activities, and the local SMEP Committee. Factors hindering leadership engagement were very few compared to the other cases. The main challenges the participants mentioned were related to changes in leadership and the shortage of public finances, followed by position and municipal elections.

Tupiratins stands out in this study with regard to community development and capacity. The residents have strong ties and a significant sense of community. Their mutual aid and community agency are the highest among the cases in this study. There are no community organizations in town other than churches and a rural settlement association. However, I observed that the residents are very supportive of each other and prompt to help. The participants of the study were divided regarding their perception of the engagement of residents. Some see the community as more passive, expecting a lot from the public authorities and servants. Others see the population as collaborative and participative in solving problems, as represented in this quote, “Face the situation, we still have a lot of participative people. Several people enjoy

helping, contributing. Even independently of gaining something back.” Some also stated that the residents enjoy participating but lack in taking action. According to them, residents need a leader to follow and to keep them engaged – otherwise, their participation would also be sporadic (as they also found with SMEP activities). Some participants also believed that small communities, such as Tupiratins, are easier to mobilize.

I found, through observation and interviews, that the individuals had great mutual respect, and the contribution to the collective usually spoke louder than political or religious differences. Community leadership skills were usually developed locally, through experience in leading activities of churches or working in public service, which is the reality of most social mobilizers. Also, several social mobilizers were engaged in different social activities in the community and were members of several municipal councils, which was reflected in greater attitude, experience, and skills in participating in community action. The overall community readiness for acting helped them to embrace and take ownership of SMEP and integrate it into their routines.

Religion plays essential social roles in the community and contributed to the leadership activism for SMEP in ways found in other cases and new forms. Some churches have branches dedicated to social work in the community and develop leadership skills of those involved, including social mobilizers. Yet, a further contribution to SMEP in Tupiratins was that faith-based representatives included mobilization and SMEP precepts into some activities they developed. Finally, another particularity in the community is that faith-based institutions are significant in nurturing the communion, solidarity, and positive ties among the residents. As some participants revealed and I could observe, faith and religion permeate the routines of residents, and the different religions respect and support each other. An example is that every

SMEP Committee meeting has been opened with a prayer in which all participate.

The political atmosphere in Tupiratins also favored collaboration among residents and institutional support for community action. That contributed to SMEP's implementation, the activism of social mobilizers, and the long life of the program in town. Above partisan politics, public managers (mayor and MSs) provide excellent support for the development of activities that benefit the community, including SMEP. The Municipal Departments usually joined forces and supported each other's programs, as they did for SMEP. Public servants and officials of different social fields and agencies collaborate and are highly committed to social welfare. Public servants also played another critical role in community agency. When there is community action, they are usually the ones taking and sharing leadership in organizing and engaging others, as happened in the case of SMEP.

The creation of robust, inclusive, shared leadership for SMEP, formalized in the local committee, and its partners were vital for the successful implementation of SMEP in Tupiratins. It also enhanced the engagement of social mobilizers. The local SMEP Committee was created not by law, but by the efforts of the two social mobilizers that attended the first SMEP workshop in 2012, who became the first leaders of SMEP in the community. With a shared approach and the willingness to include and obtain collaboration from the different institutions, areas, and programs; they invited, trained, and engaged several others to be social mobilizers. According to several participants, the commitment of those initial leaders, who set the example, and their active and inclusive endeavors were important factors for enhancing motivation and activism for SMEP.

The leaders studied BMEC's materials for organizing the SMEP Committee and attempted to create a space of collaboration, describing "the Committee as a place where

everybody both is educated and educates each other.” An invited diverse group of representatives of different institutions and social fields established the composition of the committee democratically. They designated six members to occupy the board, representing the Departments of Education, Health, Social Work, and institutions such as schools and churches. They nominated others as supporters. They also decided the Municipal Department of Education as the agency accountable for carrying out SMEP. However, they also declared more than 16 local institutions from different areas and missions as partners of the collective action.

Such a plurality of members and collaborators in the leadership of SMEP was significant to the motivation and development of capacity for local engagement and the implementation of the program. Soon the group took ownership of SMEP and started developing actions based on local needs and activities that were attractive to the community, relying on their experience and reality. For two years (2012 and 2013), they collaboratively developed an annual action plan for SMEP and implemented a variety of activities with variable frequency (monthly to annually). In October 2013, the SMEP Committee and its partners organized the first SMEP Day. Since then, SMEP Day has been made official through municipal law and became the main SMEP activity. The event is part of municipal and school calendars, and, according to the participants, the whole community looks forward to it. The big event consolidates activities for the whole community in a single day but, throughout the year, the school also develops theme projects and presents the results on that occasion. The significant participation and support of the community for SMEP activities was a great source of motivation to all social mobilizers in the study.

In 2013, there were also changes in the committee that impacted activism and SMEP’ leadership. After the municipal elections and job rotation, the most prominent leader of SMEP left the group voluntarily to assume new responsibilities. Other members of the board were also

switched, and main leadership became more centralized with public servants linked to the MDE. Despite those changes, the social mobilizers and representatives of the different areas and institutions were still invited and collaborated every year for organizing SMEP Day by the MSE and the SMEP Committee. In this way, although there is a centralization of the initial decisions of the committee in the MDE, the leadership is inclusive to other partners, in a way that the structure of the local implementation invites the ownership of SMEP by all. The collaboration and the involvement of the different MDs in the SMEP Day were significant aspects for the sustainability of the program in Tupiratins.

On the negative side, some participants indicated that changes in the SMEP Committee and the withdrawal of the main initial leader had impacted leadership activism negatively. Some stated that the remaining leader and the new board were more "sluggish" in taking and organizing action and slowed down the mobilization activities. Two also indicated that they stopped receiving invitations to participate in the planning and organization of SMEP activities. Besides, some members of the committee indicated the loss of interaction with other municipalities for getting a reference for actions as a factor impacting activism negatively.

Finally, as in the other communities, municipal elections also impacted leadership activism for SMEP negatively, but the effects of local politics were milder in Tupiratins. For instance, job rotation impacted the engagement of some social mobilizers not because a power holder wanted to prevent or sabotage their activism. Instead, job rotation impacted their involvement because it drove individuals to assume other tasks and responsibilities in their new position which disconnected them from SMEP activities. Two participants also indicated that political differences might have disturbed fellowship between social mobilizers at elections time, but just for a short period.

2.4. Barra do Ouro

Barra do Ouro is an interesting place. To reach the city entrance, you must cross a suspension bridge on the Tocantins River. The experience provides a beautiful view but might also make you feel a little anxious. The urban center is small. Most buildings are located along a main, quiet avenue with some crossing streets. Several streets are still not paved and expose salient red dirt that colors the city. Lazy dogs sleep on the streets in the late afternoon to cool off from the intense heat. It is difficult to believe that there is a hidden river beach nearby, which is used by residents mostly in the summer. People are easygoing and enjoy hanging out, celebrating, and traveling. Politics and power disputes permeate the community. The local government is the most significant source of employment, and disputes between political opponents are very fierce.

Barra do Ouro is the youngest and the second-smallest community in the study, with a population of 4.5k individuals (IBGE, 2015). Almost half of the residents (47%) live in rural areas (IBGE 2015), spread across three districts not far away from the town. The community also has one of the highest poverty rates – 46.24% (IBGE, 2003), following the two biggest towns (Carolina and Goiatins), whose population is at least three times greater than that of Barra do Ouro. The HDI in Barra do Ouro is higher than in the other two municipalities of small size. However, it is still lower than the state average HDI – 0.699 (PNUD, IDHM, 2010).

Lack of parental collaboration and involvement in school life is the main challenge perceived in local education. According to the participants, there is a local resistance, a cultural belief that teachers alone should be accountable for the education of the children. Other issues they mentioned are low educational indexes, learning gap, bad behavior of students, low salaries and qualifications of teachers, and a low public budget for education and infrastructure. The

community also lacks recreational venues, cultural activities, and other educational activities for children and adults. Local traditional festivities (horseback riding) are the most significant opportunity for community interaction. Most participants perceive the community as passive and disconnected, concerned little about the others. Unlike Tupiratins, although there is a collaboration between MDs and public servants, this small community is permeated by strong partisan politics, high competition for public jobs, "political jealousy," and gossip. For the participants, SMEP and Gaia Social helped to bring people to work together (beyond political differences), generate community, and open minds to participation.

At the time I collected the data (June 2017), SMEP was still active in Barra do Ouro; however, with less intensity and frequency. In 2013, the MDE created "SMEP Week" in the annual school calendar, which is when most of the mobilization activities are concentrated. SMEP has been carried out mostly through indoor school activities focused on getting the involvement and collaboration of parents. According to the former MSE, SMEP precepts and activities were also integrated into another policy related to child literacy in the municipality.

Several factors contributed to the leadership activism for SMEP, and its implementation in Barra do Ouro. The most prominent factors relate to the structure and the strategy used in the local implementation of SMEP and their relationship with aspects of community capacity. A few other aspects involved empowerment, field and position, and positive feelings for education. Factors that hindered collaboration and leadership activism were mainly the absence of an external encourager, the passivity of the community, local politics, conflict, and power disputes.

Barra do Ouro hosted the first SMEP workshop in 2012. Most of the 21 residents that attended the workshop ended up not becoming social mobilizers. In the same year, a group of social mobilizers invited several actors, institutions, and authorities to a public meeting where

they presented SMEP and created the local committee. Initially, the committee gathered several leaders from different fields and institutions (MDs, councils, schools, churches) and worked mainly with the contents of the SMEP booklet. After the municipal elections, in 2013, one committed social mobilizer became the new MSE and contributed actively to the committee and the implementation of SMEP activities. The MSE put SMEP on focus and advocated activism. Since then, the committee became more centralized in the MDE, increasing the engagement of school workers (teachers, principals, coordinators), but still counting on the support of individuals from different MDs and councils. In that year, they implemented an event for the SMEP Day, promoting appealing activities and cultural presentations to the community, with the enthusiastic participation of each school and its students.

Social mobilizers also participated in events of other communities, from which they received inspiration and ideas for their own. They were especially inspired by the actions of Goiatins, which is their closest neighbor. Also, according to some interviews, the population trends to value and give more attention to external practices and agents than to local workers and endeavors. Thus, social mobilizers used the strategy of showing to the local community that other towns were also engaged in social mobilization for education efforts. With that, they attempted to gain their confidence, increase their participation in SMEP activities, and grow the chances of changing their mindset and behavior.

From 2014 on, the action became more concentrated in the SMEP Week and the schools. The implementation of activities became more focused on and individualized by each school. School teachers and coordinators assumed a central role in SMEP, involving the students in mobilization activities to bring the families to participate more actively in school life and collaborate for better results in education. As in other communities, the involvement and

enthusiasm of students also boosted activism for SMEP and motivated engagement.

In this scenario, in Barra do Ouro, the committee was more critical to the implementation of SMEP at the beginning, by recruiting and organizing collective action, inspiring engagement, and enhancing the commitment of those involved until the schools took ownership of the program. However, I perceived that the support and attitude of the MSE was still an essential factor for motivating and driving engagement of those social mobilizers at schools. Thus, variations in the local government trend to affect SMEP and its leadership activism.

All participants of this study recognized SMEP as a significant contribution to the community and to face the challenges they found in local education and the community. Several developed great passion and commitment to social mobilization for education work, mainly because of its alignment with the local needs, and the learning opportunities and novelty it brought into the community. They were also motivated by the positive results they perceived, such as increased collaboration (including enhanced teamwork among educational professionals), parental involvement, and individual engagement for improving education. However, some social mobilizers complained about social passivity and difficulty of mobilizing the community for participating in SMEP activities, especially those developed at schools, which can be frustrating.

SMEP training, events, inter-municipal network, and activities of the NGOs contributed to enhancing motivation, knowledge, and leadership skills and capabilities of social mobilizers in Barra do Ouro to implement the mobilization activities. Participants mentioned that they had little opportunity for professional development or the development of human capital in the town and region. Most of them recognized that SMEP workshops, events, and activities created those. Several social mobilizers declared being highly motivated by the novelty of the activities and the

learning acquired through the formative events (SMEP workshops, meetings, and training) and the participation in other SMEP endeavors inside and outside their town. Many of them stated that the BMEC representative was also a great source of knowledge, inspiration, and motivation, as I also found in several cases.

As in the other cases, local felt needs (especially the lack of involvement of the families in education) moved leadership activism for SMEP in Barra do Ouro. However, I noticed that social mobilizers were lacking in confidence, experience, and reference for leading and implementing local SMEP activities, especially SMEP Day. Interaction with individuals of other towns and participation in their events created new opportunities for social mobilizers to learn and get new ideas to tackle local issues and implement mobilization in Barra do Ouro. Gaia Social, as an outside leader, also had a significant role in encouraging and supporting the MSE and members of the SMEP Committee. The participation of some social mobilizers (especially the MSE) in leadership development activities promoted by NGOs (Gaia Social and CEDAC) facilitated and motivated their engagement in SMEP activities, by bringing new knowledge and boosting their self-confidence. Thus, all those factors contributed to strengthening leadership activism, agency, and capacity in Barra do Ouro.

The withdrawal of Gaia Social and the end of the direct involvement of BMEC in the regional SMEP implementation impacted the enthusiasm of the SMEP leadership in Barra do Ouro, resulting in what they called “a cooling down” of SMEP activities. Several participants declared missing the support of an external institution or leader, which were often encouraging and monitoring their engagement and action.

The repertoire of activities was a factor that stood out in Barra do Ouro for fostering activism. The type of activities developed both inspired social mobilizers and attracted the

community. For instance, some social mobilizers declared that they learned from the cultural activities and lectures about SMEP that they helped to implement. According to them, the movement of the big event, the novelty of cultural activities, and the content of posters were very entertaining and helped to involve the community. Furthermore, the new strategies the teachers developed for attracting parents motivated the activism of others. Seeing the community participating in those activities, and getting more involved in school life, motivated social mobilizers to get or keep engaged. Because of that, some participants suggested that the activities should be more frequent and sequential to sustain the enthusiasm of mobilizers and community.

The activities and results also reinforced the ownership of SMEP by the schools, engaging all teachers, students, and coordinators in efforts to bring families closer. That developed unusual teamwork among education professionals. Collaboration and commitment of all boosted activism. Social mobilizers enjoyed engaging and committing to mobilize others for improving their community. They were also motivated by people giving their best to collaborate and by learning to work collaboratively despite differences.

Finally, some general aspects of the local structure created capacity for implementing SMEP. The institutional support from the mayor and the MSE enabled and encouraged leadership activism for SMEP. The active support of the MSE in the leadership of SMEP was crucial for its implementation. The network of public education workers created for the implementation of SMEP activities and the participation of individuals and agencies from different social fields also created capabilities for collective action and enthused activism.

On the other hand, local politics, conflicts, and power disputes also affected the collaboration and engagement of some social mobilizers. As in other cases, the municipal elections reflected in job rotation in public positions according to partisan politics, consequently

driving some engaged individuals from the mobilization activities. The impact was greater on individuals that were removed from working at schools or the field of education. Some mobilizers also perceived a slowdown in SMEP activities with a new transition of government, between 2015 and 2017.

Some disagreements between social mobilizers and the MSE, involving gossip, competition for official positions, and jealousy regarding the work in the leadership of SMEP also affected cooperation and activism. Some participants also perceived political differences affecting general collaboration and teamwork of education professionals. Finally, two participants mentioned that not everybody likes to work as a volunteer (without being paid).

2.5. Goiatins

Goiatins is a place full of surprises and dualities. The community is lively, full of shops, bars, and restaurants. Whoever arrives in the city tends to be mistaken, thinking that it is very urban. However, most people live in the countryside, including an indigenous community, which also has a special school. Likewise, Goiatins has a river beach that cannot be easily seen, but that is the stage for one of the biggest Summer festivals in the EHR. Powerful and vulnerable coexist. Professionals committed to working and the community's well-being suffer from the corruption of elected officials. Despite all discrepancies, Goiatins took social mobilization for education seriously, moving and bringing together a great community through an event that they had never seen before.

Among the cases, the municipality of Goiatins is only younger and smaller than Carolina (IBGE, 2017). Its area is nearly six times larger than the smallest communities and almost four times bigger than the medium ones (IBGE, 2016). Goiatins is marked by low population density because 60% of the 12.8K residents (IBGE, 2015) are spread into several rural districts that are

very different and distant from each other. Perhaps this geographic challenge has influenced Goiatins to have the lowest HDI – 0.576 (PNUD, IDHM, 2010) and the highest poverty rate – 58.45% (IBGE, 2003) in this study. Its HDI is also 17.5% lower than the state average.

The geography of the town also challenges the quality of education. Goiatins has 25 schools (municipal and state), and 20 of them are located in rural districts. Participants indicated issues related to inadequate infrastructure, distance and specific needs of several rural villages and schools, deficient school transportation, lack of information and vulnerability of families (poverty, isolation, illiteracy), lack of involvement of families in education, drugs, and school drop-out. Local politics and power disputes in the public arena and the shortage of public resources also affected education.

According to the participants, the community of Goiatins is supportive. They perceive residents as followers, meaning that they need incentives and leadership to participate and contribute to actions. Leaders can quickly mobilize the community for social support by using social media, churches, school campaigns, and partnerships between public agencies and servants. There are some community associations and unions. The different churches are essential for community capacity, as in other cases, mainly because of the social work and leadership they develop. Leaders of faith-based institutions also actively contributed to SMEP in Goiatins by participating and lecturing in mobilization activities and integrating SMEP precepts into their discourse and actions for assisting the population. Finally, public servants primarily perform social work in the community and develop inter-sectoral partnerships. They were the ones leading SMEP and gathering supporters for it.

SMEP was a great success in Goiatins for three years, with the high levels of involvement and collaboration of individuals from different institutions, social fields, and sectors. However,

the formal activities of the local committee ceased in 2015, undermining its implementation. The leaders of the SMEP Committee planned new activities to implement that year but ended up not putting them into practice. According to some interviews, the schools continued by developing indoor events to attract families.

During the time the committee was active, social mobilizers used the SMEP booklet to encourage schools to engage families. They created huge events for SMEP Day in 2013 and 2014 (including a march, prize drawings, fireworks, and special lectures by influential community leaders), which mobilized a great part of the community. Some also went door-to-door visiting rural villages for assessing the local reality, integrating SMEP with social work action. Others integrated SMEP efforts into other projects developed by NGOs (school gardens, rural libraries, MPE) or church. Some schools also integrated mobilization activities through cultural activities and festivities. The committee also created an account on Facebook for mobilizing and informing the community, which was a novelty among the cases.

Several factors related to all the four conceptual groups of variables of this study motivated or supported activism. However, local needs, the leadership of the SMEP Committee, democratic participation, collective collaboration, and institutional support gained focus. Besides those, a passion for education and a passion for SMEP emerged as the other significant themes influencing leadership activism. Political discontinuity, influence of authorities and partisan politics, conflicts among players, lack of institutional support, and weakening of leadership hindered activism.

Goiatins was the community that had more social mobilizers involved in leading and carrying out SMEP activities, which resulted in the amplification of activism in the town for a certain period. A total of 21 individuals from diverse areas attended the first SMEP workshop,

and nine participated in the second. The social mobilizers themselves democratically decided on the composition of the local SMEP Committee. It became centralized in the MDE but was supported by social mobilizers and institutions from different social fields (MDs, councils, churches, schools, unions). As in Babaçulândia and Carolina, participation of the leaders in the SMEP National Meeting, knowledge gained through training, and the representative of BMEC profoundly inspired the social mobilizers. Likewise, the visibility through SMEP and public recognition of their work also motivated and rewarded their activism.

Two central aspects that drove activism of social mobilizers and led them to appreciate and develop ownership for SMEP was their development of activities to address essential felt needs in the community and seeing the positive results of their efforts. Also, the high participation of the community on SMEP Day and their excitement was very encouraging. The social interaction and networks developed inside and outside the community encouraged leadership activism. The enthusiastic collective collaboration of social actors from different, institutions, and social fields (churches, four MDs, City Hall, municipal councils, municipal and state schools, local associations, and the Teachers' Union) and the positive influence of other social mobilizers fueled leadership engagement. The interaction and exchange with other towns was also very inspirational.

Also, a distinct point in Goiatins comparing it to other cases was the strong influence that aspects related to the sense of agency and democratic participation had on leadership activism for SMEP. In some cases, the social mobilizers already carried some attributes that facilitated their involvement with SMEP, such as being previously engaged in the community, enjoying contributing and feeling helpful to the population, and believing in positive change and feeling accountable for it. In other cases, elements gained from the process of engaging in SMEP were

motivators to activism, such as enjoying mobilizing the collective for participation and shared responsibility for education, fostering collective engagement above political differences and power disputes, and learning how to organize and doing their best to collaborate.

I also found that activism for SMEP benefited from the agency and previous leadership experience of social mobilizers. Most social mobilizers were community leaders, involved in municipal councils and community outreach activities developed by churches, and occupied strategic positions inside the government. Several of them had participated in the NGO's developmental programs, and some became the local coordinators of their projects.

Other factors that were key for the implementation of SMEP and leadership activism in Goiatins include the local strategies and structures of local implementation. For instance, the developed ownership for SMEP, based on strong felt needs, allowed a more vibrant repertoire of actions in Goiatins, which were led by different actors and institutions. Besides the activities developed collectively and led by the committee, individuals integrated strategies of SMEP into other projects, events, or programs developed by NGOs, churches, schools, and MDs of other fields. Some of them also inspired social mobilization for other causes.

Very importantly, the existence of the SMEP Committee and the leadership approach used was vital for gathering, organizing, motivating, and guiding the activism of social mobilizers and the collective action. The shared, committed, inclusive, and organized leadership of the committee encouraged the activism of social mobilizers. Also, several participants declared that the confidence, competence, and eagerness of the leaders motivated engagement. The excitement and enthusiasm of the group of social mobilizers also motivated them to become involved in leading actions and keeping up with activism. Planning meetings were also critical to keep the interaction, motivation, and guidance for the activism of social mobilizers — the end of

those led to a loss of interaction, connection, and incentive to act.

The provision of funding by the mayor and the strong institutional support (from the mayor, MSE, different MDs, churches, schools, and councils) for the implementation of SMEP, in the first two years, enabled and encouraged the activism of the leaders of the committee and other social mobilizers. Finally, several participants also mentioned the importance of the support, encouragement, and ideas brought by Gaia Social for their activism. The withdrawal of the NGO after 2013 impacted the local leadership activism negatively, according to them.

In addition to this negative factor, between 2014-2016, there was a political and financial crisis in the municipality due to the mayor's corruption, similar to what happened in Babaçulândia. That impacted the activity of the SMEP Committee and compromised the implementation of SMEP. The crisis resulted in cuts in the local public budget and a high turnover of MSEs. SMEP actions were affected by the lack of financial and institutional support, including the disconnection of the new MSE from the program. According to some participants, the new MSE put the focus on other actions at the expense of SMEP and also promoted job rotation, moving influential SMEP leaders to other positions, areas, and tasks. Although the committee has never been disbanded, the situation undermined the activism and articulation of its leadership, which, in turn, affected the engagement of other social mobilizers negatively. The lack of interaction between social mobilizers and the break in activity hindered their enthusiasm. Several participants attributed the interruption of SMEP activities to these factors and demonstrated readiness to resume activism for SMEP.

Besides these, I found other factors hindering the activism of some social mobilizers in Goiatins, but with not much effect on the implementation of SMEP in general. The most prominent were related to partisan politics and political disputes among players, such as

“political jealousy” leading to sabotage of projects and engagement of social mobilizers.

Conflicts among players (mayor and MSE, president of committee and MSE, social mobilizers) also impacted support for SMEP and cooperation between individuals.

2.6. Carolina

Carolina is a hidden paradise. To arrive there, you must ride curvy roads that cut flat-top hills and hit the heart of the Chapada das Mesas region. The town is surrounded by more than 360 waterfalls and the exuberant Cerrado – the Brazilian savanna. The city lies by the Tocantins River and holds incredible, colorful sunsets. Because of its exuberant nature, tourism has become central to the local economy. The town conducts several festivals and local businesses offer food, lodging, local products, and ecotourism services. Carolina is an old city, founded in 1859. Because of all the changes throughout History, the residents usually refer to Carolina as “*a cidade do que já teve*” [*the city that once had*], lamenting the loss of several local venues and institutions over time, such as factories and a famous school of medicine.

Carolina is the biggest municipality of this study. It is also the only one belonging to the State of Maranhão, in the Northeast region. Carolina has nearly the same area as Goiatins, but has twice the population, with a total of 23.9K people (IBGE, 2015). Although it has several scattered rural districts, 66% (IBGE, 2015) of its population lives in the urban town, unlike the other cases. Finally, more than half of its population is considered poor (IBGE, 2003). Likewise, its HDI of 0.603 is lower than the state rate of 0.639, which already is the lowest of all the 27 Brazilian states (IBGE, 2017).

Carolina has the largest number of students (5,783) and schools (59) in this research project (IBGE, 2015). The educational indexes are also the highest of the group. It is also the only one in the group that offers higher education. The participants had a positive perception of

the education system, the structure of the schools, and the qualifications of the teachers. The biggest challenge is to guarantee quality school transportation in rural areas, higher participation of parents, and better behavior of students in the urban areas. Also, among all the cases, Carolina has the highest number of community organizations, maybe because of its size and age. In comparison with the other areas, the local partnership between the different fields of public service did not stand out in Carolina.

The participants perceived several benefits from SMEP and the work of the NGOs to education and community capacity. They mentioned improved collaboration between parents and schools, better behavior of students, increased interest in schooling, higher engagement and social awareness of the community, people getting more organized, and new partnerships in the civil society for strengthening the local economy.

Several factors motivated or facilitated the engagement of social mobilizers. These were primarily position, expertise, other leadership experience, democratic participation and agency, social interaction and networks, and the visibility and outcomes they perceived from SMEP. On the other hand, SMEP activities and the activism of social mobilizers were negatively affected by politics, conflicts, and power relations, and the structure of local implementation.

The six active social mobilizers interviewed for this study in Carolina were experienced professionals in the education field, over 40 or 50, highly educated, and occupied leadership posts inside the MDE at that time of their initial involvement with SMEP. Their commitment of over 20 years to local education seems to have influenced their appointments to the SMEP leadership by the MSEs of two different administrations. It has also helped them to integrate SMEP precepts into their routine work in schools, MDE, and community organizations. Their activism was also supported by other experiences, as most of them were acknowledged leaders in

their community. They unified several organizations (churches, non-profits, councils, school boards) and two were also local coordinators of the projects of outside NGOs back then.

The municipal elections affected the composition of the initial committee because of political differences and the interference of the MSE, as seen in other cases. At the beginning of 2013, the new administration created an official SMEP Committee, by appointing four delegates from the MDE to its board and deposing the initial leadership. However, unlike the other cases, the mayor and the MSE created a paid, public position for the presidency of the committee. Thus, it took away the volunteer basis of the mobilization work, by professionalizing the social mobilizer. Also, that institutionalized the hierarchy of the MSE over the president, and of him over the other members.

The political tension was high at that time but, thanks to the mediation of Gaia Social, the new government “accepted” some social mobilizers of the former term to be part of the SMEP leading team, to support the committee. However, I found out that those social mobilizers kept developing activities individually, instead of connecting to the new committee. The members of the committee, in turn, followed the rules of the president, while he reported directly to the MSE.

Another distinction of this case was that, despite the creation of an official committee in Carolina, SMEP ended up primarily being carried out through the individual work of mobilizers, with the exception of the development of a few collective events. The primary events were the second SMEP workshop and the EHR Education Conference in February 2012, held in town, and The Great Meeting created by social mobilizers with other towns in November 2013.

As with the individual work, in 2012, the primary SMEP leader integrated the mobilization work into the NGO’s programs of literacy and libraries that she was leading in rural communities. In 2013, the new president of the SMEP Committee developed on-site meetings

and workshops in all municipal schools, focusing on managing conflict and family involvement. Another social mobilizer used his leadership position at the MDE to work with school teachers and principals towards promoting more collaboration between the schools and the community. Also, some of the social mobilizers attended and presented at the SMEP Day in Babaçulândia and Filadélfia. I also found, with the help of a city councilman, a municipal law created to institute the SMEP Day in 2013. Unfortunately, the law was ineffective and only one of the interviewees knew about it.

Besides political differences, reasons for the predominance of individual work over collaboration were multiple, as I could identify. First, I perceived that the social mobilizers framed the application of SMEP differently. They utilized different approaches for social mobilization, targeting different audiences and focusing on different needs (e.g., parental involvement, inclusive schools, education attainment, literacy, social participation, citizenship, local well-being). Second, because of their experience and their leadership positions in public education, which allowed more autonomy and confidence, some social mobilizers applied social mobilization into their work. Some mobilizers were already working with social participation as a component of their work. Also, according to the interviews, the leader of the SMEP Committee had a more self-centered and less delegating character, usually working individually, with few invitations for members to collaborate. Finally, the pride and the prestige associated with leading SMEP activities in Carolina could have contributed to a more individualized approach by social mobilizers in search of public recognition. These aforementioned reasons reflect some factors that motivated and enabled the engagement of social mobilizers or that hindered collaboration.

Furthermore, I could identify several other aspects that motivated their engagement. The participants declared that concerns about the community and local needs were the main drivers to

their activism for SMEP. Their passion for education and working with social issues also were predispositions to engagement. Moreover, they felt accountable for promoting the positive change they wanted in their communities. Some affirmed that SMEP activities matched their practice, reinforcing their work of engaging and forming citizens. Also, for some, the experience of engaging with others was a great motivator itself. They enjoyed exchanging knowledge and experience in such practices, as well as seeing citizens discovering their power and agency. The participation of the community in the activities and the results they perceived from those efforts also motivated them.

Finally, the new ties and networks developed through SMEP activities, especially by interacting with other towns and participating in their events, motivated all those I interviewed. I noticed that the visibility SMEP brought to social mobilizers was very appealing. The prestige and attention brought by the regional SMEP events and the presence of BMEC in Carolina, as well as the closer relationship with the federal government, and the opportunities for public speaking in big events on and off town, attracted the involvement of social mobilizers and the support of public managers and authorities.

On the other hand, politics, power disputes, and conflicts impaired SMEP. Different sources of data and informants made clear the great influence local and partisan politics played on the lives of residents and public services and policies in Carolina. With the departure of Gaia Social at the end of 2013, BMEC's representative also organized a meeting with members of the different the committees from the EHR to follow up and suggest Carolina as a regional focal point for communication between BMEC and the towns, and among the communities themselves in the next years. However, that mission failed. The president of the SMEP Committee quit the task in the next year, alleging a lack of funding and support from the mayor and MSE to visit the

communities, despite BMEC representative's earlier attempt to get their commitment.

The SMEP committee ceased its activities officially in 2014, due to loss of institutional and financial support from the MSE, as asserted by the president. To the president, that was due to "political jealousy" of the public officials, because of his proximity to BMEC's agent and the visibility he was gaining through SMEP work. Likewise, the reason may be linked to the lower visibility the public administrators gained when SMEP activities became more localized, since the participants indicated the officials came to be indifferent to SMEP after the last big event. Yet, that could also reflect sabotage to the work and projects of those of political opposition (former administration).

Furthermore, the participants also identified other factors that diminished the success of SMEP. Several pointed out the authoritarian and self-interested posture of the MSE and her conflictual relationship with the president of the committee as important factors that reflected in losing institutional support (from the MDE, city hall, public schools) for SMEP. Some indicated that the strong and explosive personality of the president and his inability to accept criticism also hindered his relationship with schools and committee members. I found evidence of such conflict hindering collaboration between the president and another committee member, which kept referring to each other's flaws and difficult personality in the interviews.

Respect for hierarchies and avoidance of conflicts with superiors (MSE and president of committee) in order to avoid losing their jobs also harmed the engagement of committee members. Those aspects, together with a lack of autonomy, contributed to lower the sense of agency of some of them. Finally, all those aspects seem to have been aggravated by the high, double centralization of the SMEP Committee, first in the MDE and second in the figure of the president. The dependence on the MDE (regarding decision-making, funding, and institutional

support), as well as the self-centralizing approach to leadership of the president, prevented the collaboration with others and affected the motivation and activism of committee members.

Finally, some social mobilizers off the committee indicated they kept applying SMEP precepts in their regular work with schools and organizations, regardless of the MDE, funding, or the activism of others.

3. Comparative and summative table

The table below comprises the description of the individual cases by summarizing the main findings and secondary data regarding the general attributes and socio-political contexts of each community and the features of the local implementation of SMEP. I gathered secondary data from different sources in Portuguese (IBGE, 2003, 2015, 2017; PNUD, IDHM, 2010). The table also summarizes the main factors that emerged as positive or negative influences on the active engagement of social mobilizers in carrying out SMEP activities.

Table 4. Comparison of the description of the cases and summary of factors influencing leadership activism that emerged from the analysis

General context	Darcinópolis	Babaçulândia	Tupiratins	Barra do Ouro	Goiatins	Carolina
Area	1,639,162 km ²	1,788,463 km ²	895,308 km ²	1,106,345 km ²	6,408,602 km ²	6,441,603 km ²
Population	5.8k pop (67% rural)	10.7k pop (51% rural)	2.5k pop (48% rural)	4.5k pop (47% rural)	12.8k pop (60% rural)	23.9k pop (34% rural)
Foundation year	1993	1980	1958	1996	1953	1859
Poverty Rate	42.82%	31.74%	42.86%	46,24%	58.45%	55.7%
HDI	0.581	0.642	0.587	0.603	0.576	0.634
Illiteracy rate	30.5%	28.5%	24.7%	30.5%	34.3%	23.6%
Schools (state and municipal) and number of students	6 schools (1 state urban; 3 mun. rural; 2 mun. urb) / 1442 students	10 schools (3 state urb.; 4 mun. rural; 3 mun urb)/ 2068 students	4 schools (1 state urb.; 1 mun. rural; 2 mun. urb) / 549 students	4 schools (1 state urb.; 2 mun. rural; 1 mun. urb.) / 1420 students	25 schools (2 state urb.; 10 state rur.; 10 mun rur; 3 mun. urb.) / 4477 std.	59 schools (2 state urb.; 1state rur.; 36 mun. rur.; 17 mun. urb.) / 5783std.
IDEA (2011 to 2017) – initial (Ini) & final grades (Fin)	2011 13 15 17 Ini 4.2 4.5 4.6 4.6 Fin 3.3 3.8 3.6 4.4	2011 13 15 17 Ini 3.6 3.9 4.3 4.3 Fin 3.5 3.3 4.0 4.2	2011 13 15 17 Ini 4.1 4.2 4.4 4.4 Fin x 3.3 3.5 3.6	2011 13 15 17 Ini 3.8 3.9 3.4 4.1 Fin 3.2 3.4 4.2 3.9	2011 13 15 17 Ini 4.2 4.6 4.4 4.2 Fin 3.5 3.3 3.8 4.1	2011 13 15 17 Ini 4.0 4.3 4.9 4.6 Fin 3.4 3.1 3.5 3.6

Local Context	Darcinópolis	Babaçulândia	Tupiratins	Barra do Ouro	Goiatins	Carolina
Main perceived challenges for local education	Lack of involvement of parents/ family in school life; accessibility of rural families to participate in urban school; poverty; students' bad behavior	Lack of involvement of parents/ family in school life; corruption led to loss of public resources and programs, and affected schools; high turnover of MSEs; low salaries; students' bad behavior; drug abuse	Need higher involvement of parents in school life; shortage of public budget for education; a better infrastructure; satisfied and proud of the local public education system (good teachers, good grades, and indexes)	Lack of involvement of parents in school life; resistance/ cultural belief that education is a matter of teachers; low salaries; low educational indexes; learning gap; shortage of public budget; teachers need better qualification; students' bad behavior	Lack of involvement of parents/ family in school life; school drop-out; school transportation in rural areas; distance and specific needs of several rural villages and schools; local politics;bureaucracy; shortage of public budget; adult illiteracy; poverty	Lack of involvement of parents/ family in school life; school transportation in rural areas; urban area students' bad behavior; family issues affecting students' education; satisfied with qualified teachers and education indexes
Political context	Strong institutional support to SMEP initially; respect to hierarchy affected activism; political discontinuity affected the composition of the SMEP committee directly, and the official SMEP leadership, the enthusiasm of social mobilizers, and the institutional support	Strong institutional support to SMEP initially; political discontinuity did not affect the composition of the SMEP committee; an administrative and financial crisis in the MDE and political corruption affected public education and institutional support to SMEP	Strong institutional and community support to SMEP, despite political discontinuity; political atmosphere favors collaboration and institutional support to community action; the sense of community overcomes political differences; public servants and governors committed to the social welfare	Strong institutional support to SMEP for 5 years, might sustain after political discontinuity in 2017; high involvement of MSEs with SMEP; strong partisan politics affecting positions and collaboration in public services and councils; high competition for public jobs and political jealousy and gossip	Strong initial institutional and community support to SMEP; with a political and financial crisis in City Hall, SMEP lost focus and institutional support; turnover of MSE and job rotation hindered activism and the leadership of the committee; some political disputes among players, political jealousy, and sabotage, but with not much effect on SMEP	Early institutional support to SMEP, but lost in 2014; local & partisan politics strongly influence the lives of people and the public services provided; political discontinuity, differences, and jealousy impaired collaboration, interrupted projects, and created conflicts; use of authority prevented participation; respect to hierarchy hindered agency
Community capacity/ agency	Low community agency; sporadic fundraising and donations organized in the community; churches acting in social support and community leadership development	Presence of class organizations (unions); low community engagement; residents more passive, waiting for solutions; schools as essential institutions for reuniting the community and calling for action; community interaction through traditional local festivities (horseback riding) and the beach season (community economic development)	Community has strong ties and is cohesive; communion and solidarity; collective collaboration, quick organization, and mutual support; religion is strong; churches are central for community capacity and SMEP; public servants important for community agency; divided perception about residents being passive x participatory; high attendance in SMEP Day	Low community agency; community is passive & disconnected; SMEP increased local collaboration; lack of recreational venues, cultural and educational activities, and social interaction; interaction through local traditional festivities; difficulty in engaging community in schools & SMEP actions; work of churches not very prominent; culture of non- participation.	Supportive community; participate when they have leadership; low engagement associated with a lack of information and vulnerability; Churches are essential for community capacity and SMEP. Public servants perform central social work and develop inter-sectoral partnerships; strong work with the families needed; associations and union; SMEP resulting in higher parental involvement.	Community organizations focused on local culture & economy; social projects developed by churches; strengthened municipal councils; residents more passive, oppressed by local politics/power structure; NGOs and SMEP contribution to agency: higher residents' engagement, parental involvement, & women empowerment. Several local events and venues for entertainment and social interaction.

SMEP	Darcinópolis	Babaçulândia	Tupiratins	Barra do Ouro	Goiatins	Carolina
Local SMEP Committee	Highly centralized in the MDE and MSE; members altered by the mayor based on partisan politics; SMEP saw as a business of the MDE; good teamwork in the first composition; weakened leadership, activity, and motivation in the second	Strong and shared leadership, centralized in the MDE, although there were members from other fields; leadership carried by the president of committee and MSE; same committee after political discontinuity; ownership; planning; organization; use of BMEC materials; use of local needs as themes; assessment of local needs in parental involvement; reports sent to BMEC	Strong initial leadership setting the tone for diversity and a shared accountability; democratic decision about members; centralized in the MDE but with partners from different social fields; annual planning and evaluation; recording / report of actions; strong ownership & teamwork; different local needs as themes; commitment for the public good	The committee was more important to SMEP at the beginning, then the schools took ownership. Active leadership, centralized in education and MDE, with high involvement of school workers and the initial participation of members from other fields. SMEP enhanced teamwork and commitment of those mobilizers at schools.	Centralized in the MDE but supported by several individuals/ institutions; Strong leadership, shared, committed, organized, enthusiastic. Democratic decisions about members. Teams divided by tasks. When active: regular meetings, planning, reports; strong ownership & teamwork. Weakened when the leaders stopped meeting and focused on other tasks in a political crisis.	Strong initial leadership; diffuse leadership of SMEP in the routines of professionals; Committee created as a branch of the MDE in 2013, members appointed by the MSE; collaborative work events; authoritarian and self-centered leadership; lack of collaboration/ autonomy; disagreement among members; conflicts and loss of institutional support; bad functioning; terminated in 2014
Status of SMEP activity	Last formal activity in November 2013; school kept developing indoor events to attract families	Last formal activity in September 2014 (failed attempt in 2015) – SMEP Committee still existent in 2017	Active by 2017 – annual activities through SMEP Day (involving all the schools)	Active by 2017, but less SMEP Week in the annual school calendar (activities developed by each school)	Last formal activity in 2015; schools kept developing indoor events to attract families; leaders want to resume SMEP	Last formal activity in 2014; some mobilizers included SMEP precepts/ strategies in their professional routines
Implementation of activities	Hosted the 1 st SMEP Workshop in 2012; SMEP’s introductory meeting; SMEP booklet; SMEP Day and Great Meeting in 2013; school internal activities inviting parents to Engage; Activities initially led by social mobilizers at the committee, and after by those at the urban school. Last official SMEP activity was at the end of 2013.	SMEP’s introductory meeting; SMEP booklet; SMEP Day in 2013-14 (reading; drugs); SMEP Great Meeting in 2013; activity with parents in each school assessing their participation in 2014; inclusion of SMEP in local policies; support to activities of other MDs; Planned another SMEP Day in 2015, but lost support of the MDE. Activities led actively by the committee.	SMEP’s introductory meeting; development of annual plan of action and evaluation; several activities under the SMEP umbrella, carried out by different social actors, institutions, focused on local needs in education and different social areas; SMEP Day since 2013; SMEP Great Meeting. Activities led by the committee and collaborating social mobilizers.	Hosted the 1 st SMEP Workshop in 2012; SMEP’s introductory meeting; SMEP booklet; SMEP Day (all schools, cultural activities) and Great Meeting in 2013; SMEP Week on the annual school calendar; several activities led by teachers with students involvement in order to bring parents and families to participate more actively in the school life.	SMEP’s introductory meeting; SMEP booklet; SMEP Day in 2013-14; SMEP Great Meeting in 2013; SMEP activities integrated with other actions (schools, door-to-door visits in rural villages, NGO projects, churches); Report to BMEC; created Facebook page; SMEP mobilization strategies applied to other social fields; Activities led actively by the committee and partners.	Hosted the 2 nd SMEP Workshop, the Great Meeting in 2013, and the Committees meeting with BMEC in 2014; SMEP work integrated to the job routines of social mobilizers and NGOs’ projects; work of the president in every school to promote dialogue with families; Activities usually led by individual work of social mobilizers; committee led specific events.
Municipal laws and inclusion in policies	Official decree: SMEP Committee	Official decrees: SMEP Committee and SMEP Day; SMEP precepts included in the MPE and schools’ PPP	Official decree: SMEP Day; SMEP activities integrated to other public programs (social fields)	SMEP Week in the annual school calendar; SMEP integrated to PNAIC	SMEP strategies inserted in other activities, public programs and events, including from other social fields	Official decree: SMEP Day (unheard); specific job title created inside the MDE for the presidency of the SMEP Committee

Positive Factors	Darcinópolis	Babaçulândia	Tupiratins	Barra do Ouro	Goiatins	Carolina
Socio-Demographics	Religion - Catholic (leadership development) Education / Position (working at the main school or the MDE)	Education Position (working at the MDE or schools – usually in leadership positions)	Religion (leadership development, communion and collaboration); Leadership positions - being invited by SMEP leaders as representatives	Education Position (working at schools or the MDE); being invited by the MSE; social workers and council member	Education Position (coordinator or technician in the MDE, school teacher) Religion – direct involvement of churches' representatives	Education / Age (long experience in public education); leadership position at MDE; president of the committee as an official public position
Community Capacity	Collective collaboration among social mobilizers and group cohesion; new ties, social interaction and partnerships (other social fields and towns - exchange of experience and visits); high involvement of residents and support of social actors in SMEP Day; the need for bringing families to partner with the school; having previous experience in community leadership and programs developed by the Catholic church and the NGOs)	New ties, interaction, and partnerships (other towns and social fields – new friends, visits, exchange of experience); sense of community with a shared purpose; the need to strengthen the family-school relationship and parental involvement; participation in the formative activities of the NGOs; strong, active community leaders heading the local SMEP Committee	Community agency (collective collaboration, MDs embraced the SMEP Day, community's readiness for acting, previous engagement); other social leadership experiences; strong, shared leadership for SMEP; community support and engagement in SMEP activities; new ties, interaction and partnerships; peer support and engagement; the collective is stronger than political differences; small town; local needs and shared purpose	Active support from MSE to SMEP leadership; collective collaboration; high engagement of teachers; strong local felt needs; participation in formative activities of the NGOs; new ties and interaction; external network (sharing and bringing new ideas); internal networks (links with other fields and creation of a network and teamwork among education workers); community participation and enjoyment of those involved in the activities	Social mobilizers are community leaders, engaged in councils and church activities; participation in the NGO's programs; strong, shared leadership; high enthusiastic collective collaboration; network with different social actors, institutions, and social fields; social interaction and exchange with other towns; felt needs; high participation of the community in SMEP Day; active involvement of the churches in mobilizing	Social mobilizers are community leaders; with background of caring about the collective and helping others; also engaged in councils, NGO projects and community organization; concern about the community and local needs (lack of support of parents to the schools, bad behavior of students, and social issues); new ties and interaction with other communities (friendship and mutual learning); community participation and support to SMEP
Empowerment	People working together for the betterment of their community; autonomy; engaging others, opportunities for helping others	Democratic participation (committed to teaching, mobilizing for shared accountability, and exercising citizenship); contributing for positive change in the community	Developed a sense of agency and valuable self (feeling good or accountable for helping the community / working with others, the opportunity for contributing); democratic participation (opportunity to participate in decision-making, seeking positive change, working collaboratively to promote the local common good)	Democratic participation (enjoying getting engaged, commitment in mobilizing others despite the challenges, efforts of the participants); Developed sense of valuable self and agency (happy for collaborating to their communities, doing their best, believing in positive change and feel accountable for that)	Democratic participation (already engaged, enjoying mobilization, collective engagement above political differences; learning how to organize); Developed sense of a valuable self (being helpful to community and recognized); Increased sense of agency (belief and accountability for positive change)	Developed sense of agency (feeling accountable for promoting change); enjoying being useful and the social work; democratic participation (SMEP as an opportunity of promoting positive change; reinforcing the work of engaging & forming citizens; civic engagement; learning from others; seeing people finding power)

Positive Factors (cont.)	Darcinópolis	Babaçulândia	Tupiratins	Barra do Ouro	Goiatins	Carolina
Structure & local strategy of implementation	Participation in the formative events; having outside encouragers (leadership of Gaia Social); support from the mayor and 1st MSE; strong teamwork	Municipal laws/policies; Strength of SMEP Committee (leadership, organization, and integrated strategies); support from the mayor and MSEs; BMEC materials and training; outside motivators (Gaia Social and BMEC's representative); SMEP ownership; competition with other towns	SMEP Day (annual municipal calendar); active committee and shared leadership (commitment of leaders in engaging others; a plurality of collaborators; collective effort; organization; planning); use of local needs; community took ownership for SMEP; institutional support from different public managers, agencies and social fields; attractive theme activities; planning and evaluating; perceived results	New learning & incentive gained from SMEP agent workshops and external events; strong institutional support (mayor, MSE, MDs and councils); perceived results from their efforts in schools; plural membership of the committee and high ownership by the schools based on strong felt needs; support from Gaia Social; SMEP booklet; SMEP Week in the annual school calendar; getting ideas from participating in activities of other towns; SMEP activities were culturally attractive	Participation in the SMEP National Meeting; events workshops and activities (knowledge gained); BMEC representative; SMEP booklet; SMEP Day and external lecturers networking and visibility through the SMEP work (Facebook, SMEP blog community respect); support from other MDs and institutions; decisive and positive leadership of the committee, and inclusive and excited membership; support and knowledge from Gaia Social / NGOs; SMEP planning meetings; integration of strategies of SMEP into other projects; ownership based on strong felt needs; seeing positives results from their work	Participation in the SMEP National Meeting; perceived results from the efforts; support from the MSE; support and close contact of BMEC's representative; network and visibility through SMEP (SMEP big events in Carolina; the prestige of being a social mobilizer in other towns; close relationship with BMEC)
Others	Love for education, enjoying working with the community	Commitment and love for education; hope that things will get better; enjoying social work	Love for education; education as a priority to the town	Love and commitment to education and their work; hope that things will get better	Love and commitment for education/ their work; enjoying working with the community; falling in love with SMEP	Love for education and teaching, enjoying working with the community

Negative Factors	Darcinópolis	Babaçulândia	Tupiratins	Barra do Ouro	Goiatins	Carolina
Socio-Demographics	Being outside of the education field; not being in formal leadership positions	Job rotation; Lack of time because of other jobs	Job rotation (resulting in a lack of time and detachment from SMEP)	Job rotation (detachment from SMEP); focus on new responsibilities; being out of the education field	Job rotation (affecting involvement in SMEP and the development of its activities); lack of time due to new tasks; committee members switched to other fields	Job rotation (leading to losing ties and the detachment from SMEP); focus on other tasks
Community Capacity	Loss of motivation because of weakened leadership for SMEP and community passivity	The passivity and lack of involvement of the community	Change in the SMEP Committee leadership (slowing down activities); stopped being invited to planning/organizing by the leadership of SMEP	The passivity of the population and lack of parents' involvement in school activities; hard to mobilize the participation of the community in actions	The weakening of internal leadership, which used to organize individuals and actions; difficulties in networking with other towns; less support and collaboration from others	The passivity of the population and local resistance to change
Power relations, politics, and conflicts	Partisan politics; political discontinuity; the lack of autonomy; committee's composition changed by the mayor; disputes between MSEs and MSE and social mobilizers	Partisan politics; political discontinuity (affecting institutional and financial support to SMEP and job rotation); many changes of SMEs; new governors hindering former projects and staff's involvement; conflicts among players; players' different frames about who should lead SMEP activities	Changes in committee because of job rotation after municipal elections and political discontinuity; political disparities at the time of the elections (but that are usually overcome)	Mayor changing members of councils; job rotation; partisan politics; slowdown of SMEP activities because of municipal elections; gossip and competition and jealousy among players (social mobilizers, MSEs); community lacks valuing social participation and expects solutions from the government	Partisan politics affecting institutional support and development of SMEP activities and projects; Political discontinuity; political jealousy; high turnover of public managers (mayor, MSE); conflicts between players (mayor and MSE, president of committee and MSE); lack of sense of individual agency	Partisan politics and authorities – mayor & MSE (blocking projects, jealousy, differences over collaboration); conflicts and power disputes (MSE x Committee president; authoritarianism and bad posture; dislike among social mobilizers); a sense of lacking agency (lack of autonomy, respect to hierarchies, and conflict avoidance)
Structure & local strategy of implementation	Centralization of the committee in the MDE and the MSE; loss of institutional and financial support (from the mayor); the lack of leadership of the new MSE; absence of Gaia Social and an external instigator	Loss of institutional and financial support (mayor and MSEs) – financial and administrative crisis in City Hall/MDE and devaluation of education and SMEP; dependency of MDE; a failure in the local strategy of SMEP implementation; absence of an external encourager	Shortage of financial support; difficulties in engaging new committee members; slowdown in the promotion of activities, which became more occasional	Lack of an external motivator; slowdown in the activities after Gaia Social and BMEC left; shortage of local financial resources; the gap between SMEP activities; volunteerism of the work and teachers' low salaries	Lacking institutional and financial support (new public managers did not value SMEP); financial crisis; no resources to mobilize rural areas; low activity and weakening of the Committee, pulling mobilizers away and affecting motivation; lack of an outside supporter	Lack of institutional and financial support (from mayor and MSE after 2014) and indifference about SMEP; double centralization of the committee (MDE and the president); top-down & self-centered leadership

4. Conclusion and next steps

Throughout this chapter, I presented and discussed the main findings of the within-case analysis of each community. I provided a brief description of each case, by highlighting some characteristics of the communities, their socio-political context, and the particularities of the local implementation of SMEP, and discussed the main factors I found influencing the leadership activism for SMEP positively or negatively. **Table 4** summarizes the main aspects and findings. The analysis of each case allowed some preliminary comparison, revealing some similarities and differences among the six communities, and providing some initial insights of patterns and relationships between variables. I will deepen this comparative investigation in the next analytical procedure – the cross-case analysis.

In the within-case analysis presented, the analytical focus was on the local context and emerging themes from each community regarding factors affecting the leadership activism for SMEP. For further cross-case analysis and synthesis, I will examine patterns, similarities, and discrepancies in the findings across the six cases to understand the relationship of factors and conditions with the engagement of social mobilizers. In the next chapter, then, I will present the main findings of such a comparison.

Grounded on the conceptual framework of this study, I will address each research question separately to explore the relationship between the active engagement of social mobilizers (dependent variable) and their sociodemographic characteristics, community capacity, power relations and empowerment, and the structure and strategy of local implementation of SMEP (conceptual sets of independent variables). I will also present some observations regarding interrelations I found between the independent variables.

CHAPTER VII – Findings of the cross-cases analysis

Mobilização é criar mecanismos que possibilitem a oportunidade das pessoas se envolverem no processo educativo, não só na dimensão da escolaridade, mas também na dimensão das problemáticas sociais do meio em que a pessoa vive.

[Mobilization is creating mechanisms that allow the opportunity for people to get involved in the educational process, not only in the dimension of schooling, but also in the dimension of the social problems of the place in which the person lives.]

Elis Regina, social mobilizer, Carolina

This chapter presents the results of the second analytical phase of the comparative case study methodology: the cross-cases analysis (Yin, 2015). After understanding the context and the perceived reality in each community, which I presented in the previous chapter, I was able to examine patterns, similarities, and discrepancies in the findings across the six cases regarding factors related to the engagement of social mobilizers in leading SMEP activities. In this chapter, I explore the relationship between each of the four concepts (groups of independent variables) that compose the conceptual framework of this study and the local leadership engagement in SMEP, for addressing my four research questions. I present the findings concerning each group of independent variables (sociodemographic characteristics community capacity power relations and empowerment and the structure and strategy of local implementation), as well as observations regarding their interrelation.

To compose the cross-case analysis, I combined three approaches. First, for each of the four concepts or groups of independent variables (themes), I looked across the findings (including categories and sub-categories) that emerged in the six cases and compared them to identify similarities, patterns, and differences. Also, I incorporated more data from documents, my notes, and memos to complete the analysis and interpretation of the findings in each theme.

That stage also included looking at some aspects of the contexts of each community and comparing them to find any correlations to the engagement of the leadership of SMEP or insights regarding other factors that have emerged. Finally, I also used my conceptual and theoretical frameworks to guide the investigation of aspects and variables that did not emerge from the data or that were not clear in the within-case analysis. From there, I developed the synthesis and assertions I present following.

In each section of this chapter, I will explore the findings of a particular concept or theme, followed by presenting a two-column table containing a summary of them. I will also present a chart that illustrates the relative importance of the variables and the relationship among them within each conceptual group. The tables and charts also help to identify aspects that were recurrent or interconnected across the groups, which I will explore later in the final chapter. Finally, at the end of this chapter, I will also present other two themes that emerged in all the cases: positive feelings about education and the community and love for SMEP.

1. Sociodemographics

Regarding sociodemographics, a pattern in all the cases suggests that there are two main variables related to the engagement in leading SMEP activities: field of work and position. In some areas, age and educational attainment seem also associated with those two. Religion was another variable that stood out in some cases and in different ways. Finally, gender and marital status had no relationship to the engagement of social mobilizers in SMEP.

Most social mobilizers were public servants, working in the field of education. This fact closely relates to the finding that the communities perceive SMEP as a public policy or action, whose implementation and leadership should be of responsibility of the MDE: the local governmental authority for the provision of public education. I found such perception of SMEP

mediating or influencing several other variables in the study, which I will explore later.

In most instances, the social mobilizers were assigned or invited by the MSE or the leaders of the local SMEP Committee to integrate the team or participate in the promotion of the activities, and their work position was a solid criterion for getting involved. If they worked in leadership positions under the MDE (such as MSE, directors, or coordinator of programs and schools), they were more likely to be engaged as leaders of the SMEP Committee or as implementers of social mobilization for education activities. Working as managers of public schools (principals and coordinators) or as teachers also increased their chances of being part of the Committee and of actively participating in the implementation of SMEP activities, respectively. This was especially true in the communities where SMEP was still taking place in 2016-2017 (Tupiratins and Barra do Ouro), where the schools embraced and became the main focal point or leader in carrying out SMEP-related activities (Barra do Ouro, Tupiratins, and Darcinópolis), and where the community agency (Goiatins and Tupiratins).

I also found that position and field of work may act as mediating variables between social mobilizers' engagement in SMEP and educational attainment and age. Firstly, the vast majority of the social mobilizers interviewed had a college degree, which seems to be associated with their job positions. Getting a college degree either has led them to occupy the positions in the public service that drove them to SMEP. Also, in all the six cases, the dominant academic expertise was Pedagogy. Other proficiencies were related to subject matters taught in schools (Languages, Sciences, Maths, History) and also stood up in the three biggest communities (Babaçulândia, Goiatins, and Carolina), which also had the highest number of schools.

In the six communities, several social mobilizers had continuing education and graduate certificates, all in the education field. That was the case of almost all social mobilizers in the two

largest communities (Goiatins and Carolina). I discovered that in those communities there was a trend of assigning public servants with significant experience in local public education for leadership of SMEP, which in turn reflected in higher median age in the groups of social mobilizers. Besides Carolina and Goiatins, the proportion of older individuals in the group was also higher in Tupiratins, which represents the three towns with the longest existence. The SMEP efforts in the communities that were instituted as a municipality later (Barra do Ouro and Darcinópolis) were also led by a younger group of social mobilizers, which suggests that extraneous variables such as the age of the municipality might be moderating the age of individuals in leadership positions in the local public education and in implementing SMEP.

Although the group of social mobilizers in Tupiratins are likely to be experienced, they share with Barra do Ouro the lowest educational attainment in the study. Those communities are also the least populated ones among the cases and are to some extent remote, especially Tupiratins. I found that such communities usually encounter more difficulties in accessing opportunities for continuing education. This was evidenced in the interviews in the case of Barra do Ouro, where learning through the formative events and SMEP activities and their novelty was a substantial factor for motivating the engagement of social mobilizers. By comparing the cases of the two biggest and the two smallest communities, one can suggest that size and location of the town might act as extraneous moderators in the educational attainment of those in public positions and acting as social mobilizers. However, this apparent relationship requires further investigation.

Interestingly, the groups in Tupiratins and Barra do Ouro were the ones still carrying out SMEP activities in 2016 and 2017, with the support and involvement of the local government officials (Mayor and MSE). The experienced groups in Carolina and Goiatins adopted different

strategies and lost support and enthusiasm along the way.

Public servants from other fields, primarily social work and public health, were also involved in the implementation of SMEP activities and were perceived as important contributors in almost all communities (except for Carolina), especially in the smaller ones. Those were usually invited by the MSE or leaders of the SMEP Committee to collaborate by joining efforts for carrying out the SMEP activities (as a member of the Committee or not) or by participating in the actions. Representatives from those social fields generally were in the positions of coordinators of programs, technicians, or even Municipal Secretaries in MDs. Those interviewed also had vocational or college degrees in the related areas. Finally, members of municipal councils, especially the Guardianship Council and Council of the Rights of Children and Adolescents, were also likely to be invited to participate as social mobilizers.

I observed that social mobilizers working in fields other than education were more likely to engage only in the initial years, actions, and events for the implementation of SMEP, losing involvement along the way, regardless the community. I found several possible explanations for this. One of those is of government officials or SMEP Committee leaders stopped inviting the social mobilizer to participate in the actions. Again, the typical framing of SMEP as a duty of the MDE seems to make the social mobilizers sense that they need to be invited to participate in someone else's action or program. Likewise, paying respect to the business of the other area and to hierarchies was associated with such misperceptions in some cases. Finally, other reasons may be related to having to focus on tasks specific to their fields, lack of time for involvement, lack of support from superiors, and loss of interaction with the group of social mobilizers because of their new functions.

Also, a crucial factor influencing the loss of engagement of social mobilizers, especially

those initially in the educational field, is the job rotation of individuals in the public functions - which seems like the “game of musical chairs.” This phenomenon is a consequence of municipal elections and political discontinuity and is often directed by partisan politics and the indications of local authorities (major and MSs). In almost all the communities with the Tupiratins, the alteration of job positions affected the engagement of social mobilizers in several ways. The most frequent was by displacing the individuals from strategic positions and assigning them to other functions or fields that led them to pull out of SMEP activities, because of other duties, lack of time, or lack of invitation to participate. Job rotation may have also driven social mobilizers to lose their positional power, such as in Darcinópolis, or to engage in political conflicts. Moreover, as in the cases of Goiatins and Darcinópolis, switching job positions of SMEP Committee members weakened SMEP’s planning, action, and leadership, which were also important to motivate and engage others. Finally, the high turnover inside the MDE, particularly in leadership positions, undermined the continuation of SMEP activities and the support for the activism of social mobilizers, as found in Babaçulândia, Goiatins, and Carolina.

Religion was also a prominent factor in the study. The relationship between religion and the engagement of social mobilizers was evident through different factors. Most of the social mobilizers in the study were Catholic, although several others were members of one of seven different churches or reported having no religion. Also, the MSE or SMEP Committee leaders often attempted to include representatives of the different religious institutions in the group, in some communities, or to invite them to participate in the SMEP actions, as suggested by BMEC and Gaia Social. However, those efforts did not necessarily guarantee their engagement.

I observed that increased institutional engagement of faith-based organizations in SMEP took place in the two communities with higher community agency (Goiatins and Tupiratins). In

those cases, leaders of the churches or active members of their programs were more involved, providing more direct support to the implementation of SMEP, by participating in the Committee, events, and activities, and disseminating SMEP’s ideas and efforts along with their organizational activities. They also seem to foster attitudes of public work, mutual respect, solidarity, and collaboration in the community.

Finally, faith-based organizations, especially the Catholic, are those who usually promote social work for the betterment of the local well-being in all the communities, through groups and projects. I found that several social mobilizers actively engaged or led those activities, during or before implementing SMEP, which suggests that religion, through such organizations, is an important resource for creating a reference for mobilization, opportunities for collaborative work, and for developing community leadership. These, in turn, are reflected in the engagement in SMEP in several cases. The following table (**Table 5**) shows the summary of the findings related to socio-demographic characteristics of the social mobilizers. Also, *Figure 8* illustrates the relative significance and connections of the variables within the group.

Table 5. Summary of the findings relating sociodemographic characteristics with the leadership activism in SMEP.

Sociodemographics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social mobilizers were usually public servants in the field of education, likely to work in leadership positions inside the MDE and public schools ● Usually college degree and expertise in Pedagogy, and graduate certificate (in the biggest towns) ● Public servants of other fields disengaged earlier ● The perception of SMEP as an action of the accountability of the MDE hindered the activism and involvement of individuals from other fields ● More experienced and older social mobilizers in the communities that were established longer ● Job rotation in public positions highly affected the engagement of social mobilizers in diverse ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Religion was a significant variable ● Most of social mobilizers were Catholic, but several other churches participated in SMEP ● Engagement and direct contributions of the churches for SMEP was higher in communities with also higher community agency ● The invited representatives of the churches in the SMEP Committee were not necessarily engaged ● Faith-based organizations often provided reference for mobilization, opportunities for collaborative work, and developed community leadership in the region, which reflected positively in the engagement of social mobilizers

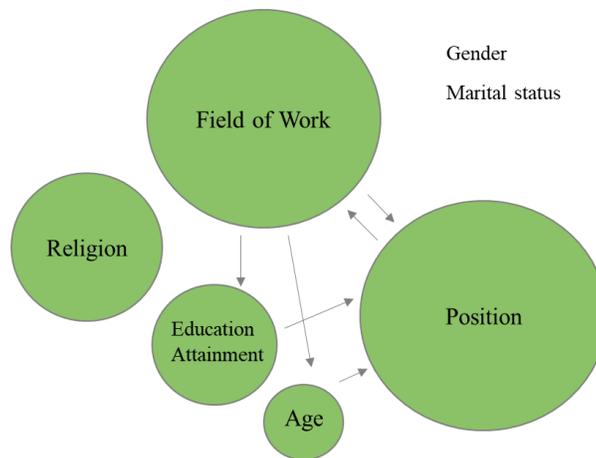


Figure 8. Relative significance and relationships among variables - sociodemographics.

2. Power relations, politics, and empowerment

Local and partisan politics intertwined with power disputes and conflicts were very strong factors affecting the individual and the collective engagement of social mobilizers and, consequently, the implementation of SMEP. Issues related to local politics prevail in the region and had a negative influence by creating competition and conflicts, preventing individuals' participation, cutting institutional support, or undermining cooperation for SMEP's implementation. Because of the positional power structure of the community and the centralization of the SMEP leadership in the MDE, the engagement of social mobilizers and the lifetime of SMEP were highly influenced by variations in the local government and those in governmental offices, which was accentuated by municipal elections and political discontinuity. That was maximized where SMEP was highly centralized in the MSE, whose power determined the sustainability of SMEP activities and could enable or prevent the participation of individuals in its leadership. Paying respect to hierarchies may have hindered the social mobilizers, while civic engagement, collective work, and the opportunity of democratic participation usually boosted it. Accountability and belief in evoking positive change in the community were motivational.

2.1. Politics, conflicts, and power relations

Issues related to power and local politics emerged in almost all the interviews. Local and partisan politics intertwined with power disputes and conflicts showed up as very strong factors affecting the individual and the collective engagement of social mobilizers and, consequently, the implementation of SMEP. That was evident in all the communities, and their effect on the cases varied according to the different local political contexts.

Usually, local politics had a negative influence by creating competition and conflicts, preventing individuals' participation, withdrawing institutional support, or undermining cooperation for SMEP's implementation. Conflicts between players often were related to political differences, power disputes, and competition for public positions. In the region, there is also a concentration of power in the hands of government officials (mayor and MSE), which impacted individual's participation in the leadership of SMEP and support for its activities, directly and indirectly, and in either positive or negative ways. Finally, the municipal elections and political discontinuity complemented this scenario, accentuating power and political disputes and redefining those in public positions, thus, indirectly influencing both the feasibility of engaging in SMEP and the lifetime of the program.

Local authorities, especially the MSE and the Mayor, are important power holders in the EHR communities and influenced the engagement of social mobilizers and the implementation of SMEP by several ways. First, by fostering or withdrawing the local government support for the implementation of SMEP activities, which seemed crucial to the existence of the program. In all the communities, the engagement of social mobilizers often fades away with lack of official support. I also found that the continuity of SMEP activities as an acknowledged collective action was only possible in the communities when the official support (institutional and financial)

provided by those players took place.

Second, the direct engagement of the MSE in the leadership of SMEP or its activities, organizing and encouraging other social mobilizers for collaborative work, usually was positive when it occurred (as in Barra do Ouro and Tupiratins). However, when the MSE was involved and her leadership was not enthusiastic, the social mobilizers disengaged (as in Darcinópolis). Moreover, the MSE may have enabled, boosted, or prevented the participation of social mobilizers by either appointing them for the leadership of SMEP or dismissing them from the SMEP Committee. Finally, both the Mayor and the MSE influenced the engagement of social mobilizers indirectly, by nominating and switching government employees in their positions or by changing members of municipal councils, which could affect their involvement with SMEP, as previously mentioned.

The latter situation is also related to partisan politics and power disputes, which might negatively impact the participation of social mobilizers in several ways. Based on political affinity or rivalry authorities can make use of their power to allocate or displace individuals in public office. Several interviewees stated that local politicians often object or sabotage projects of those of political opponents. This happened to some social mobilizers, who ended up with no support or resources for carrying out SMEP activities. Reducing support or suspending projects that were proposed or started by another political group is a common practice in a region when a new group takes the lead of the local government. That might have been the case of SMEP in some places, such as in Darcinópolis and Carolina. New governors can also restrict the participation of former ones, such as in the case of Babaçulândia and Darcinópolis, taking away important leadership for SMEP.

Partisan politics, power disputes, and conflicts also led to hampering cooperation among

players and to hindering their engagement for the implementation of SMEP. I found that political differences between social mobilizers might lessen their collaboration in the EHR, but its significance in affecting their engagement in SMEP is much less than the one of political differences between the MSE and social mobilizers and of power disputes between them. In at least four communities, power disputes between the MSE and social mobilizers were evident. Their impact could be broader, such as influencing the loss of official support to SMEP (as in Carolina), or more specific, usually hampering the participation of particular social mobilizers (such as in Goiatins, Darcinópolis, and Barra do Ouro), through the means explained earlier.

Beyond political differences, power disputes and conflicts between MSE and social mobilizers, when existent, were usually embedded with competition for positions, power, and public recognition, and by “political jealousy.” According to interviewees from five different communities, appointed officials (particularly MSEs) often are afraid of losing their positions to others and may exert power over them to prevent their place from being taken, this includes social mobilizers. In the case of SMEP, there were accounts in three communities (Goiatins, Darcinópolis and Barra Ouro) where the MSE somehow hampered the work of a social mobilizer due to a belief that the person was showing off and gaining power and visibility in the community, thus, representing a possible threat to his or her position. Also, the perception of social work as politics seems common among some politicians. That may drive the MSE to believe the social mobilizer was doing this work to steal the official’s position or to hamper his or her government, instead of supporting the community, which is also intensified when they are political opponents.

Likewise, the term “political jealousy” was mentioned by several participants to explain why new officials restricted the participation of former ones (Babaçulândia and Darcinópolis) or

community leaders and their projects (Goiatins, Carolina, and Barra do Ouro). Fear that former officials might shine brighter or prove to be more competent than new ones would make them lose their offices. I found that gossip involving other players can also facilitate this, such as in Barra do Ouro.

Finally, concentration of power and authority by the leader of the Committee in Carolina hampered the engagement of social mobilizers. Different frames among social actors regarding social mobilization and who should carry out SMEP activities and how, negatively influenced the cooperation and the engagement of social mobilizers and its implementation in Babaçulândia.

Another factor that impacted SMEP indirectly in the EHR was the municipal elections. They typically increased political disputes. They also resulted in the redefinition of a political party in charge of the local government for the next four years, new elected and appointed officials, staff turnover in important public positions, and job rotation among public servants. Such factors were also highly intertwined and had influence over the engagement of social mobilizers individually and collectively and the very lifetime of SMEP in the communities.

In all the cases, the municipal elections somehow affected the leadership engagement and the implementation of SMEP negatively. Even in the two towns (Tupiratins and Barra do Ouro) where SMEP was officially functioning by July 2017, the social mobilizers reported a slowdown in the activities of the program and less cooperation between social mobilizers in the months before and after the elections. These are times of increased political disputes when people are concerned about electing their candidates and keeping their jobs and positions in the public system or in being appointed for better ones.

Elections also imply change in the political party, the government and the new mayor and MSs, which may affect the continuity of the official support to SMEP. There were two municipal

elections in the context of this research, at the end of 2012 and 2016. The year of 2013 represented significant political change for almost all the communities (except Barra do Ouro), and SMEP activities were low initially. However, Gaia Social took on important work in the governmental transition, encouraging and organizing the social mobilizers and inviting the new officials for support and partnership in the implementation of SMEP. Such a strategy also brought visibility to the new politicians and those involved with SMEP and resulted in the most active year of the program in the region. However, I noticed that the official support (institutional and financial) for SMEP activities was likely to fade away in the following year in communities when a different political party assumed the government, as happened in Darcinópolis, Carolina, Babaçulândia, and Goiatins. On the other hand, the MSE kept highly involved with SMEP and sustained his support in the two smallest communities, Barra do Ouro and Tupiratins, where the elected party did not change and where it changed but the community agency is influential and social welfare is above political differences, respectively.

In the three biggest communities (Carolina, Babaçulândia, Goiatins), turnovers in the MSE position in the following years (especially 2014) was a remarkable factor influencing the loss of official support for the activities of social mobilizers. According to the interviews, such political discontinuity directly hindered the recognition of the social importance of SMEP by the new MSEs and their support for its implementation. The reasons could be related to the MSE's disconnection from the local history of SMEP's, his lack of interest (or sabotage) of someone else's project, new focus and priorities of the government, and reallocation of resources. The turnover in positions inside the MDE, bringing servants with less experience and disconnected from SMEP, also impacted the activities of the Committees in Babaçulândia and Darcinópolis.

Finally, municipal elections also imply job rotation of public servants, and changes in the

membership of SMEP Committees led by the mayor and the MSE, which often interferes with the engagement of social mobilizers, as was previously discussed. The appointment of individuals and also their displacement from positions are typically based on their political orientation and power disputes. I also learned that job rotation can take place in different phases of a government term. The most common is the initial, after new governors take office and change the employee composition of the government, where usually people switch positions based on their support to their campaign. The same logic applies to job rotation taking place in the election year (or the fourth year of the term), which may also be resultant of power disputes. Lastly, I found the displacement of people in the second year is also common, being usually based on disputes for power and leadership positions, as I explained, and on conflicts or revenge.

2.2. Empowerment

Several aspects held back the empowerment of the social mobilizers or were, to some extent, disempowering. Difficulties with funding was one of those. Also, the issues of local politics and power disputes in the EHR that I presented made clear that those factors could have easily jeopardized the agency and the activism of social mobilizers, even when they were willing to keep engaged. The very structure of the local leadership of SMEP linked to the MDE made the Committees, the social mobilizers, and their activities vulnerable to changes in the local government and the disposition and decisions of public officials. The power structure of the community, which was centered on positions, also fostered that.

Some attitudes related to the local power structure stood out as hindering the agency of social mobilizers. First, I observed that paying respect to hierarchies was a common practice of social mobilizers, evident at least in three communities (Babaçulândia, Darcinópolis, and Carolina). Individuals seemed to recognize the authority of superiors and respected them, which

impacted their engagement in SMEP. In this way, social mobilizers lost autonomy and, to avoid conflict, tended to follow decisions (of the MSE or the Committee president, for instance) even when they disagreed and when those implied the disruption of SMEP activities. Also, there were cases where the social mobilizers ceased their engagement in order to avoid interfering in the new government's business (as in Babaçulândia and Darcinópolis). I believe such attitudes are cultural and also represent mechanisms of protection against the loss of their jobs and positions.

On the other hand, leading SMEP, which required being engaged and engaging others, enabled the social mobilizers to develop new feelings and attitudes and to experience individual and collective empowerment. I found that several social mobilizers already carried a sense of accountability, knew their own value for the public good, and were engaged in the community, which facilitated their activism in SMEP, a cause they related to. Others gained such perceptions, attitudes and skills through the very process of engagement. In both cases, involvement in SMEP allowed them to practice organizing community action for meeting local needs. This bolstered their sense of agency and their enjoyment in civic engagement, collective and collaborative work, and subsequently their contribution to the community.

In all the communities, several social mobilizers declared feeling accountable for making change and were happy to be able to contribute to their community. Many stated that they were driven by the willingness of seeing things better and by the belief that they could generate positive change in their community by engaging in SMEP. That sense was also boosted when they began to recognize the results of their efforts, especially those related to community participation in their activities and behavior change in terms of parental involvement, a theme to which I will return in the last section of this chapter.

In general, I found four main linking civic engagement and democratic participation to

leadership engagement in SMEP. First, social mobilizers' activism in SMEP was motivated by mobilizing people for engagement. They believed that a shared responsibility for education must take place in the community. They frequently defined the community as passive, waiting for action of the government and schools, lacking understanding that they needed to engage and collaborate. Second, several social mobilizers declared being willing or already being engaged in the community. SMEP, then, represented an opportunity for reinforcing their approach of work and actions, as well as an instrument to cope with local issues in education or even other areas, such as public health and social well-being.

There were two other aspects related to the very experience of engaging and participating. One was feeling good and excited when participating, contributing and exercising their citizenship. Another one was the satisfaction of working with others for the common good, seeking for the betterment of education above political differences. The collaborative work, where people were doing their best for positive change, was presented as very motivational and as an opportunity for learning and for personal and professional development. In smaller communities with lower agency (as Barra do Ouro and Darcinópolis), the collective engagement and movement to promote the common good appeared as an exciting and needed novelty.

I found aspects relating civic engagement to activism for SMEP important in both cases of higher and lower community agency and of more and less experienced leadership, for different reasons. However, the particularities seem to relate to the social mobilizers at the individual level, rather than to patterns among the communities.

The following table (**Table 6**) summarizes the findings related to politics, power relations, and empowerment and the engagement of the social mobilizers in SMEP. Also, *Figure 9* illustrates the relative significance and connections of the variables within the group.

Table 6. Summary of the findings relating power relations, politics, and empowerment with the leadership activism in SMEP.

Power relations, politics, and empowerment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local and partisan politics intertwined with power disputes and conflicts highly affected the activism ● Local politics created competition and conflicts, prevented individuals’ participation, cut local institutional support, and undermined cooperation for SMEP’s implementation ● Government officials (MSE/mayor) and variations in the local government strongly influenced the engagement of social mobilizers and SMEP’s lifetime, which was fostered by the positional power structure of the communities and the centralization of the SMEP leadership in the MDE ● Municipal elections and political discontinuity complemented this scenario, accentuating power and political disputes and redefining the local government and those in public positions, which impacted the collective collaboration and the engagement of social mobilizers ● Municipal elections also hindered or slowed down SMEP activities ● The positive and enthusiastic engagement of the MSE in the SMEP Committee boosted activism ● Power disputes (competition for positions, power, public recognition, and “political jealousy”) and political differences between the MSE and social mobilizers hindered their activism ● Government officials affected the involvement of social mobilizers also by assigning or displacing them from work positions and the SMEP Committee, and by supporting or sabotaging their projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The high turnover in the MSE and other positions inside the MDE negatively impacted the activism ● Local politics, power disputes, and dependency on the local government disempowered mobilizers ● Paying respect to hierarchies and quitting ideas to avoid conflicts with superiors, decreased the social mobilizers’ agency and involvement ● Leading SMEP allowed the mobilizers to develop positive feelings and empowering experiences ● Some mobilizers already carried a sense of accountability, of their public value, and were engaged, while others developed new perceptions and skills during the very process of engagement ● Involvement with SMEP developed organizing skills, bolstered their sense of agency and their enjoyment for collaborative work for the public good and engagement ● Mobilizers felt accountable for making change and happy to be able to contribute to their towns ● Were driven by the desire to see things better and the belief that they could make positive change ● Four aspects linked civic engagement and democratic participation to leadership engagement in SMEP: motivation to engage the “passive” community for shared responsibility for education; SMEP reinforcing their previous desire of engaging or their approach to work; feeling good and excited when participating; and the satisfaction of working with others for the common good

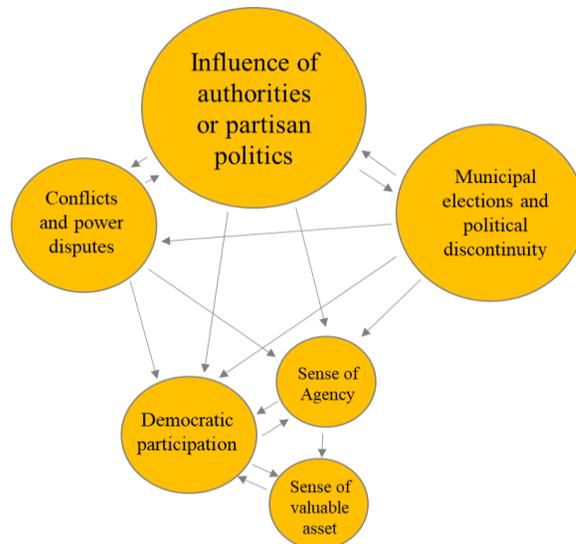


Figure 9. Relative significance and relationships among variables - power.

3. Community Capacity

Community capacity had a two-way relationship with the implementation of SMEP. It created capacity and motivation for engagement in SMEP at the same time it was bolstered by the SMEP proposal and the activism of social mobilizers. Having a strong local leadership for SMEP and the way it was carried out impacted the activism of those actors. The social mobilizers were frequently leaders in their communities, engaged in local councils and outreach activities developed by churches and NGOs. This helped their development and involvement with SMEP. Cases with higher community agency seemed to overcome political differences more easily, and collective engagement highly motivated the participants. New ties and collaborative networks established across social fields and communities were also significant in encouraging and individual and collective action. Having a common purpose based on local needs and concerns regarding education was another important factor for engagement, as well as the participation and appreciation of the SMEP activities by the community. Finally, the implementation of SMEP in the region seems to have contributed to the enhancement of individual and community agency and the strengthening of the community field. It also enabled

the creation of internal and external networks that supported community action for a certain period.

The importance of community leadership in the engagement for implementing SMEP was prominent in all the cases. First, most of the social mobilizers considered themselves leaders in their communities. Several were engaged in municipal councils, usually in the fields of education and social work. Also, many got involved in outreach activities developed by churches and projects of the outside NGOs. Those two institutions were found central for the leadership development in the region, in addition to the very work of social mobilizers in leadership positions at the MDE and schools. In the case of the NGOs, the participation of social mobilizers in their projects (Gaia Social, CEDAC, INMED, and AlfaSol), especially as local coordinators, facilitated their engagement in SMEP. I also found that the most engaged and enthusiastic leaders of SMEP Committee (Goiatins and Babaçulândia) and MSE (Barra do Ouro) were those who also participated actively in the educational programs developed by the NGOs. In general, participation in the activities of the NGOs positively enhanced motivation, experience, skills, knowledge, and public recognition of social mobilizers, which was reflected in their SMEP activism.

Developing local leadership for SMEP (from inside and outside the community) was very important for the activism of social mobilizers. Usually, it helped to encourage and to organize the social mobilizers for engagement and collective action. I found that the way SMEP's leadership was conducted impacted the social mobilizers' activism. Cases with strong, enthusiastic, active, and shared leadership were more effective in supporting the engagement and the collaborative work of social mobilizers (as in Goiatins, Tupiratins, and Babaçulândia). The active engagement of the MSE also boosted that effect (Barra do Ouro and Tupiratins). When the

leadership of the SMEP Committee became disengaged (Goiatins and Babaçulândia) or weak (Darcinópolis), the participation of the other social mobilizers in SMEP usually ceased as well. Also, the authoritarian and highly centralized leadership of the president of the SMEP Committee in Carolina prevented the collaboration and participation of other social mobilizers and resulted in the loss of the institutional support to SMEP activities. Finally, SMEP Committee's leaders and other social mobilizers were highly motivated by the regional leadership of Gaia Social I will return to this in the next section.

Cases with initial higher community agency (Tupiratins and Goiatins) seem to have overcome political differences for working collaboratively more easily. I could notice that the readiness of these two communities enhanced overall engagement. On the other hand, in at least three cases (Barra do Ouro, Babaçulândia and Darcinópolis), the usual passivity or lack of engagement of the community regarding education, generally expecting solutions from the government or the schools, both motivated and discouraged social mobilizers from carrying out SMEP activities. Likewise, social mobilizers from other communities (Carolina, Tupiratins and Goiatins) mentioned the self-indulgence of community members and their resistance to change as challenges to their work.

In almost all the communities (except by Carolina), the collective engagement and the collaboration of different social actors and segments of the society in SMEP were highly motivating to the social mobilizers. The enthusiasm of all and the engagement of specific segments, such as the school teachers in Barra do Ouro, maintained their participation. The involvement of the MDs of other social fields and their support to SMEP was highly encouraging in the cases, which also created new networks for collaboration.

The social interaction and the positive and new relationships and networks developed

during and for the implementation of SMEP were important for the encouragement, support, and organization of individual and the collective action in all the communities. According to the participants, the interaction with individuals from inside and outside the community was very motivational. It also brought personal and professional benefits, especially in meeting new people and making new friends, as well as having the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas and seeing new realities beyond their own. Interacting with new people and specific groups in the community, such as children, through SMEP events, was also thrilling to many mobilizers.

Inside the communities, the partnership among individuals and institutions across social fields was significant for enabling and inspiring the involvement and collaborative work of social mobilizers. In most of the communities (Tupiratins, Darcinópolis, Barra do Ouro and Goiatins), several participants reported that the efforts, readiness, enthusiasm, and hard work of other social mobilizers (peers) motivated and boosted their activism. In Goiatins, the loss of interaction between social mobilizers became one of the causes for the collective disengagement.

Participants of all communities stated that the interaction, ties and partnership created across the municipalities in the EHR, through a network of social mobilizers, were very motivational and supportive for their individual and collective engagement. They were also important for the organization of community action in each of the cases and the collective action at the regional level. The social mobilizers enjoyed visiting other municipalities and establishing new ties and friendship with people from other places, which also meant opportunities for comparing realities, discovering common concerns and struggles, and feeling they were not alone or isolated. Participating in events with neighboring towns also represented opportunities for sharing and exchanging experiences, which many social mobilizers declared as educational and inspirational for their activism. Several stated that they learned by participating in the SMEP

activities of their neighbors, bringing encouragement and ideas back for the work in their own communities. Receiving visitors was also a source of pride and excitement for their engagement. Such networks were also important for developing collaboration and organizing skills for collective action, which was required for the execution of the first SMEP Day in each community, with the support of visiting social mobilizers, as well as for the Great Meeting – a regional event developed through the efforts of all.

A sense of community fostered through SMEP actions was also important for the engagement of social mobilizers of at least five towns. Being part of an engaged collective, where all people were together sharing concerns about education and with the purpose of improving the common good of their communities was inspirational for the participants.

Moreover, I found that the alignment of the SMEP proposal with locally identified needs and concerns regarding education in their communities was a very robust motivator for the engagement and support of social mobilizers and other social actors. These primary needs facilitated the engagement of parents and families to support students and schools, as well as the mobilization of the community for valuing education and collaborating for its betterment.

Finally, the participation and appreciation by the community for the SMEP activities also motivated the social mobilizers' engagement. They enjoyed seeing a growing involvement of parents in the SMEP's and schools' activities, as well as the engagement of different groups, such as students, teachers, families, churches, and the whole community in the collective actions. In some cases, this involvement also represented a second level of engagement (of the civil society and local institutions) as proposed in the SMEP strategy.

In this scenario, the activism of social mobilizers was usually boosted by the very process of implementing SMEP, which has contributed to the enhancement of individual and community

agency and capacity. By engaging in the leadership of SMEP, the social mobilizers developed skills, were publicly recognized for their work, and interacted more closely with the community, crafting their emergent leadership. Through this process, individuals also discovered their agency, developed teamwork and collaborative skills and committed to inform and to engage others for the common good in their communities.

Community capacity was also enhanced by the creation of networks within and across communities (and external NGOs). Such networks established partnerships and collaboration for the implementation of SMEP, which provided resources, support, reference, and development of organizing skills for community action for meeting locally identified needs. The implementation of SMEP in the EHR also seems to have strengthened the community field. It fostered the collaboration of individuals and institutions across social fields to improve education. It created new interactions, ties, and opportunities for sharing experience. There are places, such as in Goiatins, where the approach and strategies were also used to mobilize the community for other social issues. SMEP also fed the sense of community by offering a common purpose and an invitation for collective engagement, through community action.

Finally, there were several factors that were problematic for community capacity building. One was the easy disengagement of social mobilizers, regardless of the reason. Even in Tupiratins, the leaders of the Committee mentioned they had to recruit and engage the social mobilizers more than once. Also, the communities usually have low agency and people are not used to engage and to organize. According to the participants, the residents usually wait for the government's provision and have resistance to engage. Thus, a strong and persistent community leadership is needed to provoke behavior change. Also, some mobilizers suggested that the quantity and frequency of SMEP activities were not sufficient to provoke substantial change and

voluntary, sustained engagement. Moreover, the strategy of local implementation became too centralized in the local government, not enabling the civil society to take real ownership as an ongoing movement or a community action. Another factors included: lack of collaboration and disposition of some social mobilizers; the laborious work and shortage of money and time for mobilizing; conflicts between players in the community (such as teachers and MDE/MSE in Babaçulândia and Goiatins); divergent frames regarding SMEP and mobilization preventing collaboration; local politics, political differences, and power disputes prevailing over targeting the common good; as well as the power structure of the communities.

The following table (Table 3) provides a summary of the findings related to community capacity and leadership activism for SMEP. Also, *Figure 10* illustrates the relative significance and connections of the variables within the group.



Figure 10. Relative significance and relationships among variables – community capacity.

Table 7. Summary of the findings relating community capacity with SMEP and leadership activism

Community Capacity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Two-way relationship: created capacity and motivation for engagement in SMEP and at the same time it was bolstered by the SMEP proposal and the activism of social mobilizers ● Social mobilizers were frequently leaders in their communities, engaged in local councils and outreach activities developed by churches/NGOs ● Most engaged and enthusiastic leaders participated actively in the educational programs of the NGOs ● The leadership for SMEP and the way it was carried out impacted social mobilizers activism: it was more effective when strong, enthusiastic, active, shared ● The passivity or lack of engagement of the community both motivated and discouraged the activism of social mobilizers ● Collective engagement was highly motivating ● Places with higher community agency seem to have overcome political differences more easily ● New ties and collaborative networks established across social fields and communities encouraged and organized individual and collective action, but were not sustained in most of the cases after 2013 ● Events conducted with other towns enabled the of discovering common concerns, exchanging experiences and ideas, fostering pride, excitement, encouragement, and developing organizing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SMEP fostered the sense of community (being part of a collective, working for the common good to improve shared concerns), motivating engagement ● The common purpose based on locally identified needs had an important influence in leadership activism ● The participation of residents in SMEP activities and their engagement boosted mobilizers' activism ● Leading the SMEP mobilization activities enabled the development of leadership and organizing skills, collaboration and teamwork, as well as the discovery of agency and the public recognition of the social mobilizers ● The implementation of SMEP contributed to enhancing individual and community agency, to strengthening the community field, and to creating internal and external networks that supported community action for a certain period ● Factors that challenged or hindered community capacity building were primarily: dependence on Gaia Social, low agency in the communities and difficulties in changing behavior towards engagement, low frequency of SMEP activities, SMEP ownership by the local government and not by the civil society, lack of collaboration, diverging frames, conflicts, local politics, political differences and power disputes in general, the power structure of the communities

4. Structure and strategy of local implementation of SMEP

The structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP held great importance to the activism of social mobilizers and the sustainability of SMEP in various of the aspects that I analyzed. Some of them relate to instruments and approaches created and used by BMEC to develop the local leadership of SMEP. Others relate to the regional strategies employed by Gaia Social to enable and strengthen the local implementation of SMEP. Finally, there are those regarding the local organization and efforts of social mobilizers and the choices made by the

local leadership of SMEP and the government of the towns.

I found that the financial and institutional support from the local government was crucial in all the cases. The leadership and support from Gaia Social as an outside agent were also vital and created motivating networks that disappeared after the NGO left. The support from other MDs also built capacity and motivation for collaboration, while municipal laws for SMEP were not enough for ensuring engagement. SMEP formative events and materials fostered learning and references for action but were insufficient to induce action. Even so, the social mobilizers, especially those in the education field, took ownership of SMEP. They legitimated the cause upon identified local needs and developed activities that were locally appealing. However, motives were not enough for their sustained activism. The leadership of the local Committee influenced the engagement of social mobilizers, being more effective when it was shared, inclusive, and enthusiastic. Alternatively, when it included the active engagement of the MSE. Organization and strategic planning were important for guiding the collective action and maintaining the interaction between social mobilizers and their activism. Finally, perceiving positive results from their mobilization work highly enthused the social mobilizers and reinforced their engagement.

4.1. Leadership development for SMEP – training, events, materials, and guidance

Concerning the leadership development for SMEP, the BMEC's workshops and SMEP events were important for imparting knowledge, training, and inspiring ideas and action of social mobilizers for the SMEP implementation. However, they alone were not enough to propel the implementation of local SMEP actions. In addition, the workshops were not vital to the formation of social mobilizers; many did not attend those events and were trained or instructed by others. Even so, some participants from Goiatins and Tupiratins complained that teachers

were not properly trained to be social mobilizers and should have been invited to the workshops, as technicians from the MDE have. Also, the attendees did not necessarily intend to be a social mobilizer, as revealed by some participants (Barra do Ouro and Goiatins), who saw in the workshops an opportunity for continuing education and enhancement of their resume.

Several social mobilizers (from Barra do Ouro, Carolina, Babaçulândia, Darcinópolis, and Goiatins) declared they were excited by the knowledge and motivation gained through the SMEP workshops, events, and activities. They considered the novelty and significance of the theme and approaches highly valuable for coping with local issues. Also, many participants (Barra do Ouro, Goiatins, Carolina, and Babaçulândia) declared being highly inspired and enthused by the BMEC's delegate who led the workshops. Likewise, all that attended the SMEP National Meeting, organized by BMEC, affirmed the event boosted their eagerness to act. I believe the event also fostered a better commitment of the social mobilizers because those who attended became important SMEP leaders and remained engaged for longer.

In general, the information materials developed by BMEC were important for providing guidance and a reference for the action of the social mobilizers, although those players rarely accessed the virtual platforms (website and blog). The most important material was the SMEP booklet *Families, engage in the school life of your children*, which was distributed in all the communities by the social mobilizers. They also used this document as support material in their mobilization activities. It supplied them with information and confidence to approach the community about parental involvement. On the other hand, nobody mentioned the document of the Plan, the main material that comprised guidelines and strategies for mobilization based on the PDE goals. The social mobilizers used this document only during the workshops for the construction of the action plans, which they did not follow through.

Moreover, only a few social mobilizers (from Babaçulândia, Tupiratins, and Goiatins) visited the SMEP blog and website for more information. The content was especially important for the engagement in Babaçulândia and Tupiratins, where the leaders of SMEP consulted and used the materials to create the local Committees and instruct other social mobilizers. Social mobilizers from Babaçulândia and Carolina also actively reached out to BMEC's agents, asking for support with resources and guidelines for developing SMEP activities in the school. This nurtured their activism and allowed their engagement in new sorts of action for a while.

Overall, I found that having references or models of SMEP actions that they could follow affected the social mobilizers' involvement positively. In all the cases, I observed that the social mobilizers often sought guidance and needed references of activities, ideas, and strategies for mobilization to boost their confidence in approaching the community, to provide direction for the work of mobilizing others, and to organize the collective action. Besides looking for guidance and reference in BMEC's materials and agents (Babaçulândia, Carolina, Tupiratins, Goiatins), social mobilizers (Barra do Ouro, Goiatins, and Darcinópolis) often sought the support of Gaia Social for ideas and direction. Moreover, participating in the activities of other towns supplied them with new ideas for actions (Barra do Ouro, Babaçulândia, and Carolina), while others (Goiatins and Tupiratins) used their own experience about what their community enjoyed in past actions to decide on the best strategies to use in SMEP locally.

4.2. Local official support – institutional and financial support and municipal laws

4.2.1. Local institutional and financial support

The institutional and financial support of local government officials, especially the MSE and the mayor, were crucial aspects that affected the activism of social mobilizers. In all the communities, their support was decisive for the initial implementation of SMEP and continuity

of official activities affecting the leadership of SMEP and the engagement of social mobilizers. Moreover, the relationship of government officials with social mobilizers could also affect their activism, as already discussed. In cases where SMEP was still active in 2017 (Tupiratins and Barra do Ouro), the Committees and social mobilizers always had the support from the MSE and the mayor. Also, the MSE was directly involved in the SMEP leadership, being supportive and encouraging. In contrast, the leaders of the SMEP Committees of all cases terminated earlier (Carolina, Darcinópolis, Babaçulândia, Goiatins) declared that the loss of the institutional and financial support from the local government was a key factor leading to the end of activities. The social mobilizers often attributed the lack of support to the lack of interest of the politicians in SMEP, their lack of knowledge about its importance to the town, as well as their disconnection from the initial implementation of SMEP and political feuds and power disputes with those that initiated or continued carrying out the actions. Other critical factors were a local political and financial crisis (in Babaçulândia and Goiatins) and the shortage of local public financial resources in all the five smaller towns.

I perceived that the effect of the local government on SMEP was strong in the cases of the EHR, mainly because the BMEC's strategy for promoting the local implementation of SMEP (facilitated by Gaia Social) ended up anchoring its leadership and accountability under the MDE without providing any federal funding. The local government became, then, the main developer and sponsor of SMEP, while the civil society was barely involved in its leadership. All the SMEP Committees were created inside the MDE. Moreover, the mobilization was volunteer work, done usually by public servants associated with the MDE, and involving public education and public schools, under the administration of the MDE. Therefore, even if the MSE was not directly involved in the leadership of SMEP, her support to the group of social mobilizers was

important to foster or hinder their activities.

Financial support for SMEP was critical, according to most participants from all the cases. Because the administration of the public education funding was under the city hall's responsibility, the subsidy for transportation and other inputs for SMEP activities depended on the approval of the mayor and the availability of local capital. Also, participants from Barra do Ouro and Goiatins revealed that the volunteer nature of the work led individuals to quit the involvement in the mobilization actions.

On a positive side, in all cases, support from other players and institutions, such as school principals and teachers, municipal councils, and MDs of other fields, motivated and enabled the involvement of social mobilizers and contributed to the SMEP implementation.

4.2.2. Municipal Laws

As a strategy requested by social mobilizers, the government of five towns decided to create municipal laws related to SMEP, in 2012 and 2013. In Tupiratins, Babaçulândia, and Carolina, the law established the creation of the SMEP Day. In Barra do Ouro, local authorities added a SMEP Week to the annual school calendar. In Babaçulândia and Darcinópolis, the mayor signed a decree that specified the composition of the local SMEP Committee.

In general, the laws did not guarantee the engagement of players, the activism of social mobilizers, or the continuity of SMEP. However, the establishment of the SMEP Day and Week seemed to have contributed for the endurance of the activities in Tupiratins, and Barra do Ouro (which were active by 2017), as well as in Babaçulândia (until the Committee lost institutional and financial support for the activities in 2015). The commemorative days fostered the organization and the recurrent involvement of social mobilizers, and the participation of different community players, who already expected and longed for events, according to the interviewees.

In Carolina, where the collaboration between social mobilizers was lower, the SMEP Day remained on paper after 2013 and the law stayed out of their awareness.

The establishment of the membership of the SMEP Committee through laws not only did not ensure one's involvement but could also prevent it. Most of the nominated members of the Committee in Babaçulândia barely or never got involved with SMEP. In Darcinópolis, the official displacement of Committee members and leaders for SMEP and the designation of new ones by the mayor, based on political issues, prevented the participation of former devoted and influential social mobilizers. This also resulted in weakened local leadership of SMEP, the inactivity of the members, and the end of SMEP after 2013.

4.3. Leadership organization – SMEP Committee, strategic planning, and communication

4.3.1. The local SMEP Committee and centralization

In general, I found that the Committees were important for establishing local leadership, ownership, and accountability for SMEP. They organized the collective action and activities and promoted the involvement and collaboration between social mobilizers. Particularly in the communities of Tupiratins, Bababaçulândia, and Goiatins, I observed that the existence of the SMEP Committee and its strong leadership were crucial for organizing, leading, and enthusing the activism of social mobilizers, respectively. The Committees also became a reference for engagement in some communities (Goiatins, Tupiratins, Barra do Ouro). However, overall, the institution of SMEP Committees did not ensure the continuity of SMEP activities nor the participation and activism of social mobilizers - members or not.

Usually, the social mobilizers who assumed leadership positions inside the Committee became more accountable and involved in SMEP activities. Also, in all the cases their attitude and activism influenced the participation of other social mobilizers positively or negatively, as I

presented in the community capacity section. Members also influenced the activism of peers by teamwork, agency, and enthusiasm (Tupiratins, Goiatins, Darcinópolis, and Barra do Ouro).

Being nominated as a member did not assure one's involvement.

Structurally, all the six local SMEP Committees were linked to the MDE, with variable involvement and support from the MSE. They were mostly led by social mobilizers in the field of education and sometimes comprised the MSE as the main leader. The leadership approach differed among the cases, as did the composition of the Committee and the involvement of its members. By comparing the successful cases of Tupiratins and Barra do Ouro with the disengagement in Darcinópolis, I found that the centralization of the leadership in the MSE was positive only when she actively engaged and guaranteed institutional support to SMEP. Also, the shared leadership approach (as in Tupiratins and Goiatins) resulted in a higher organization and activism of social mobilizers, in contrast to the self-centered and authoritarian attitude of the president in Carolina, which prevented the involvement of others. Finally, engagement was also enhanced when the Committee was more plural and inclusive (in terms of social fields and institutions), creating partnerships outside the MDE to lead and implement SMEP activities (Tupiratins, Goiatins, and Barra do Ouro).

4.3.2. Strategic Planning and Communication

From what I could investigate, developing a strategic plan for SMEP contributed to the organization and guidance of the collective action of social mobilizers and their supporters, which facilitated and fostered their activism. However, in the first two years, Gaia Social had a crucial role in encouraging them to execute their agenda. First, the action plan created in the SMEP workshops was not enough to promote their engagement in implementing SMEP in 2012, and they needed a push from the NGO to start the activities. The same way, the general plan

created collectively by the social mobilizers in the workshop in 2013 remained on paper until Gaia Social visited the communities and stimulated and organized the Committees to act collectively. The municipal election and transition of government might also have hindered their initial engagement, among other factors.

On the other hand, after the NGO left the region at the end of 2013, I noticed that the SMEP Committees that adopted planning strategies regularly (Tupiratins, Barra do Ouro, Babaçulândia) ended up developing SMEP activities collectively for longer. The planning strategies helped to direct, organize, and maintain the involvement of social mobilizers. I also found that the engagement of social mobilizers was boosted when the strategic planning incorporated the results of past events evaluation (Tupiratins) or local assessments regarding education, social issues, and parental involvement (Babaçulândia, Tupiratins, and Goiatins).

I found that the loss (Goiatins) or absence (Darcinópolis and Carolina) of planning strategies by the SMEP Committee directly hindered the collective action and the engagement of several mobilizers. The end of regular planning meetings held by the SMEP Committee highly impacted their activism in Goiatins. In these cases, I also observed that the lack of communication between social mobilizers, regardless of the reason, ended up weakening the collaboration, isolating efforts, or disengaging individuals.

4.4. Strategies of the local action - ownership, repertoire of activities, and perceived results

4.4.1. Ownership of SMEP

In all the communities, the social mobilizers took ownership of SMEP, especially those professionals in the education field. They recognized that SMEP's proposal related to their local needs, so they focused on the themes and purpose of the mobilization activities. Thus, SMEP created motivation and grounded their activism. However, that alone usually was not enough to

sustain their engagement or SMEP actions. In contrast, in some cases, SMEP-inspired approaches became part of the routines of professionals and schools.

I found that activism and the longevity of SMEP were prolonged when other local players (beyond the leaders of SMEP) became actively involved and kept embracing it, which I am interpreting as a second level of engagement, resulting from the initial mobilization efforts. That seems to be the case of the two communities where SMEP actions were still taking place in 2017: Tupiratins and Barra do Ouro. In the first case, actors of different social fields, local institutions, and the community ended up embracing the movement through an annual event (led by the MDE and the SMEP Committee) and small actions intertwined to their regular activities. In the latter, the schools and network of local educators took ownership of SMEP and integrated mobilization activities in their annual calendar and routine. The collective engagement was enhanced in both places, strengthening the community action. I noticed that both cases included small populations, a high involvement of schools in the actions, the active involvement of the MSE in the leadership of SMEP, as well as the support from the mayor.

Although it requires further investigation, these findings suggest that the active involvement of the local schools in SMEP extended the activism of social mobilizers and boosted the engagement of the community, strengthening SMEP-related activities and community action. Besides the positive relationship found in Tupiratins and Barra do Ouro, some participants from Babaçulândia believe that the local implementation of SMEP was jeopardized because the schools did not take ownership of it, as the leadership of the SMEP Committee expected. Also, in Darcinópolis, after the municipal elections, the political differences between the MSE (who became leader of the SMEP Committee) and some earlier social mobilizers (who assumed the management of the main school) hindered their collaboration

and the engagement of the school in further official SMEP activities, which were terminated at the end of 2013. The school team kept holding some isolated, indoor activities to attract the participation of the families, but the mobilization lost activism and force as a community action.

In 2017, I also found isolated mobilization activities inspired by SMEP being developed individually by social mobilizers (especially educators) in their professional routines (Carolina, Goiatins, and Babaçulândia) being incorporated in the school activities (Darcinópolis and Goiatins), however dissociated from other agents, the MDE, and local SMEP Committee. In Goiatins, a few actors also took ownership of some of the strategies used in SMEP to mobilize the population for issues of other social fields.

4.4.2. Frequency and repertoire of actions

I observed that the kind and the frequency of SMEP activities that the social mobilizers carried out influenced their excitement and engagement, as well as the participation of the community. Developing actions that were appealing to the population was crucial. The mobilization activities were usually aimed at imparting information and raising awareness of the importance of the collective engagement in education, so having good attendance and participation of the population and recurring actions was key.

Large events, such as the SMEP Day, remained as the major reference to the social mobilizers and community. Social mobilizers of four communities (Goiatins, Tupiratins, Barra do Ouro, and Darcinópolis) stated they loved carrying out these events, which attracted lots of residents and were full of enjoyable activities, including instructive and compelling posters, games, lectures, booklet distribution, collective marches, and cultural activities. Conducting public lectures and the active participation of the students in the creation of posters and cultural performances also excited several leaders. The cultural activities were significant for enthusing

the social mobilizers in Barra do Ouro because of their novelty.

Other strategies that inspired the activism of the social mobilizers were those they developed by combining their creativity, local knowledge, and the specific needs of their community. Evidence of this was the diverse SMEP activities that also included issues and actions of different social fields developed in Tupiratins, the specific themes and approaches of SMEP activities based on local needs assessments in Babaçulândia and Goiatins, and the tactics created for drawing a higher parental involvement in the schools by the teachers in Barra do Ouro. In Goiatins, the creation of a Facebook page to promote the activities and results to the local community by the SMEP Committee was also a way to communicate, gather efforts, and inspire the engagement of social mobilizers and the population, which worked for a while.

Mobilization endeavors continued for longer and engaged other mobilizers when the Committees and the community integrated them into the regular activities of organizations and other programs. Those are the cases where SMEP was integrated into some schools through cultural and thematic projects, commemorative dates, and community meetings (Goiatins, Tupitarins, Barra do Ouro, and Darcinópolis), as well as into the activities of social work and public health programs and the churches (Goiatins and Tupiratins). Also, Gaia Social's strategy of fostering the involvement of social mobilizers in other projects implemented by the NGOs, such as the rural libraries, school gardens, and literacy program, as a SMEP approach, seemed effective in maintaining activism in some communities (Darcinópolis, Goiatins, and Carolina), but only while the NGO was present.

Also, some social mobilizers highlighted that the work of mobilizing others was not easy. The work and the development of activities required continuous efforts from the actors and several inputs, including time, organization, transportation, and financial resources, which were

even more necessary when they developed activities outside the schools and in the different rural areas. Thus, those factors might have limited or discouraged their activism too

The execution of SMEP actions was not constant, and its frequency was also affected by local politics, leadership flaws, and other factors in the EHR. Several participants from all the cases pointed out that the slowdown of SMEP activities fostered their disconnection and impacted their sustained involvement negatively. Also, some from Babaçulândia and Barra do Ouro mentioned that the gap between the actions ended up cooling down the collective engagement and suggested that the regular occurrence of activities would be a better strategy.

4.4.3. Perceived results and achievements

Regardless of which and how many SMEP activities they developed, in all the communities the social mobilizers perceived positive results from their efforts and achievements, which highly stimulated their activism as well. I found that seeing and showing positive results from the mobilization activities they developed in their communities enthused them to keep engaged. Those perceived results also give clues about the contributions of SMEP to individuals and communities. In four cases (Tupiratins, Carolina, Goiatins, Barra do Ouro), participants observed individuals becoming more aware and caring about others and more engaged in their communities. In the same localities, they also noticed increased collaboration and organization among people. Some social mobilizers from Barra do Ouro, Goiatins, and Carolina also observed the beginning of a shift in the local mindset regarding the importance of education and parental involvement. They also noticed a higher interest in schooling, including by adults, in Carolina and Goiatins, as well as better integration between family and school. Also, social mobilizers attributed the progress in the behavior and achievement of students (in Barra do Ouro, Carolina, Tupiratins, and Goiatins), in the presence and involvement of parents (in Barra do Ouro,

Tupiratins, and Goiatins), and in the credibility, agency and mutual collaboration of teachers (in Barra do Ouro and Goiatins) to SMEP activities. In Carolina, one participant also attributed the empowerment of local women to SMEP actions.

In all the cases, the social mobilizers acknowledged that what was done was essential but still not enough to provoke substantial change in their towns. Even in communities where SMEP was active in 2017, many believed that more activities and continuous efforts would be necessary to settle SMEP in the locality, enabling and fostering the ongoing engagement of social mobilizers and residents and changing the general mindset and behavior in their communities about education and social participation. Others believe that, even with such efforts, some people, dynamics, and behavior would be difficult to change.

4.5. National and regional strategies – networks, support, and visibility

4.5.1. Networks and support from NGOs and external agents

Regarding the networks for support and collaboration, I found that the regional strategies created by Gaia Social were very significant for the active engagement of social mobilizers and the implementation of SMEP, while the national strategies developed by BMEC were not. However, the regional strategies and their effects were not sustained or lost force after the NGO ended its involvement with SMEP in the region, which elucidated the importance of an external agent for supporting and encouraging the activism in the cases.

Concerning BMEC's national strategies, the development of a national network of social mobilizers and the use of the SMEP blog as an instrument where they could connect, share experiences, and get inspired for ongoing action were both ineffective for the EHR. The social mobilizers barely used the tool as an opportunity for interacting with others, getting more involved, or gaining visibility by disclosing their efforts and results. Among the six cases, only

the local SMEP Committee of Goiás shared its activities in that national network, by sending data to BMEC's blog and reports. In addition, the list of local SMEP Committees remained outdated on BMEC's blog, with no information about the communities of this study. That also shows a failure in BMEC's strategy of keeping a national registration of social mobilizers, aiming at facilitating connections and recognizing local leadership and accountability for SMEP. In 2012, with the support of Gaia Social, social mobilizers of most of the EHR communities provided their contact information for BMEC's catalog but never heard about it anymore (except by those who attended the SMEP National Meeting at the end of that year).

From what I perceived, in general, the registration did not enhance the commitment or the activism of social mobilizers in the EHR, neither their power before local government officials regarding the decision-making about SMEP. During the data collection, only one participant (from Carolina) mentioned the registration. However, that measure was very meaningful to her, because it raised her sense of agency. For her, being documented by the Ministry meant that she was entitled to do the mobilization work regardless of the support of the local government. Her work as a social mobilizer, which integrated SMEP precepts into her professional routine as an educator, reflected that frame too.

The regional strategies created by Gaia Social - of developing a collaborative work among the communities and of being a regional leader in organizing the implementation of SMEP - were crucial for the implementation of SMEP in the region and the engagement and motivation of social mobilizers and other players. The interaction, organization, and collaboration among social mobilizers of the different municipalities, which Gaia Social promoted, was a factor that highly motivated their engagement and participation in activities inside and outside their communities, as already presented. The regional network was also vital

for boosting the confidence of social mobilizers and for developing organizing skills and ideas that were more effective in attracting and mobilizing their communities. In addition, the strategy used by the NGO of organizing the towns in clusters based on geographical proximity for the first SMEP Day facilitated their collaboration and participation in each other's actions.

Moreover, the regional leadership of Gaia Social and its direct and active involvement were critical for organizing the local implementation of SMEP and for keeping the activism of social mobilizers alive. Participants from all the cases acknowledged the importance of the NGO. The roles Gaia Social played in coordinating the formative events and in organizing, supporting, and instructing the social mobilizers and MSEs made the initial implementation of SMEP possible in all the cases. The contribution of the NGO was also key in negotiating and guaranteeing funding from the MSEs and the consortium of enterprises for the participation of the local social mobilizers in the SMEP formative events and activities. This enabled their leadership development and fostered their activism.

In 2013, Gaia Social used approaches that were significant for the continuity of the local implementation of SMEP after the municipal elections and for boosting the engagement of social mobilizers. The NGO's meetings with the new MSE in each community during the transition of the governments and the 2nd SMEP workshop were especially vital in the cases of Carolina, Darcinópolis, Babaçulândia, and Goiatins. This resulted in the support of the new local government to SMEP activities and its openness for the integration of earlier and new social mobilizers, which was less successful in Darcinópolis because of political differences.

Moreover, the existence of Gaia Social was significant for creating and strengthening local SMEP Committees, after the social mobilizers did not follow through the collective strategies they designed in the second workshop (of creating a SMEP Organizing Board and

virtual platforms for communicating and organizing integrated activities and a regional event). Most of the social mobilizers resumed or amplified their activities that year only after receiving the visit of the NGO. The NGO's agent also inspired and nurtured the organization of social mobilizers and local Committees for the execution of the SMEP Days in each community and the SMEP Great Meeting. Participants of almost all the communities (except Carolina) emphasized that Gaia Social was very important for fostering their activism, by encouraging and supporting them (including with ideas) and by constantly pushing them and following up regarding the development of local activities.

In this context, I also found that the local SMEP Committees developed a heavy reliance on Gaia Social's leadership, despite all the efforts and strategies used by the NGO to enhance the regional and local accountability for SMEP and to foster the sustainability of the actions, the inter-municipal collaboration, the agency of social mobilizers, and the commitment of the local authorities. After Gaia Social and the other NGOs left, several endeavors lost force. First, the regional network for SMEP (and the ADE) collapsed. Most social mobilizers lost contact with the other communities, except Babaçulândia, who maintained the exchange with Filadélfia for another year. Also, BMEC's idea of turning the SMEP Committee of Carolina as a regional focal point to integrate other Committees failed, starting with the attitude of the president and the loss of support from the local authorities.

The implementation of SMEP slowed down or terminated in all the communities after the NGO left. The Facebook page created by the NGO to join and disseminate the SMEP activities of the EHR Committees had no more activity. These facts suggest a certain local dependency on Gaia Social for action.

The very social mobilizers indicated such dependency in the interviews and evidenced

the importance of an outside leader. When I asked about the reasons why the SMEP activities slowed down or ended in their towns, the interviewees often stated that, among other things, they missed Gaia or somebody encouraging them, pushing them, and following up about their activities, as the NGO did. Several also pointed out that they believed SMEP was and would be very beneficial to their communities, but they were missing an external leader that could boost their activism again, by encouraging, directing, and organizing them, and restoring the integration within the region. Some participants (Tupiratins, Goiatins, Carolina) suggested the need of an outside sponsor for the SMEP activities, as the consortium of enterprises (CESTE) did when promoted the SMEP leadership development endeavors in the EHR.

4.5.2. Visibility

Finally, the local visibility brought by SMEP was also stimulating in some cases. Social mobilizers of four communities (Goiatins, Barra do Ouro, Darcinópolis, and Carolina) were motivated by the credibility and the prestige they gained in their town and region because of their involvement in the leadership of SMEP. Participants of three cases (Goiatins, Darcinópolis, and Barra do Ouro) declared feeling proud and enthused when the community acknowledged their efforts and demonstrated respect for their activism. Likewise, I could notice that the engagement of some agents (from Carolina and Goiatins) was also driven by the prestige associated to SMEP, brought by being leaders of a community action and big events, performing lectures for the public in their own and neighboring towns, and being in a direct connection with BMEC representatives. Those opportunities seemed to be empowering for them.

The following table (**Table 8**) shows the summary of the findings related to the structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP with its leadership activism. Also, *Figure 11* illustrates the relative significance and connections of the variables within the group.

Table 8. Summary of the findings relating the structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP with its leadership activism

Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The financial and institutional support from the local government was crucial for the execution of SMEP activities and the mobilizers' engagement ● Leadership and support from Gaia Social as an external agent were vital for inducing, motivating, and organizing engagement, and creating local and regional collaborative networks, but they didn't ensure sustained activism after 2013 (dependence) ● When existent, the support from other MDs and the positive engagement of the MSE fostered engagement and built capacity for collaboration ● SMEP's leadership development events and materials fostered reference, learning, interaction, and ideas, but were insufficient to induce action ● SMEP internet platforms were underused ● The SMEP booklet was a key supporting material, in contrast to the SMEP Planning document ● BMEC's representative highly inspired the leaders ● Guidance and reference for activities, strategies & ideas provided by BMEC, Gaia, peers from other towns, and local knowledge enabled and enhanced self-confidence and activism of social mobilizers ● Anchoring the implementation of SMEP in the MDE limited the ownership of activities by the civil society and their engagement, and created dependency on the local government's support, which highly affected highly the mobilizers' activism ● The lack of external funding and the shortage of local public wealth undermined SMEP activities ● Municipal laws for SMEP did not ensure engagement ● Local Committees were important for establishing local leadership, ownership, and accountability for SMEP, organizing the collective action and activities and promoting the involvement and collaboration between social mobilizers ● Social mobilizers in leadership positions of the Committee were more accountable and involved, and influenced the participation of others ● Being nominated a member of the SMEP Committee did not assure one's involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The absence of SMEP activities, especially if regularly, scheduled, and designed to organize and guide leadership undermined collective action ● Gaia Social was key instigating the mobilizers implementation of their action plans in the first 2 years ● Lack of communication weakened collaboration, isolated efforts, and led to disengagement ● Social mobilizers (education field) took ownership of SMEP because of its alignment with locally identified needs ● The leadership activism, the longevity of SMEP, and collective engagement were higher when other actors also took ownership of SMEP activities (especially schools), enhancing community action ● Some social mobilizers (usually educators) kept developing isolated mobilization activities inspired by SMEP in their professional routines ● Developing activities that were locally appealing and occurred frequently influenced the engagement of social mobilizers and community ● SMEP Day was the main reference for action. Posters, marches, cultural activities, public lectures and the involvement of students was motivating ● Mobilization efforts lasted longer and involved other mobilizers when they were integrated into regular activities of organizations and other programs ● The lack of regularity of SMEP activities, their gap, and slowdown contributed to disengage actors ● The laborious and voluntary work of mobilizing others ended up discouraging some individuals ● Perceived positive results from their work highly enthused the leaders, reinforcing their engagement ● BMEC's strategies of national registration and network of social mobilizers were ineffective ● Collaborative networks of towns enhanced organizing skills, ideas, and activism ● Social mobilizers missed the work of an outside leader (Gaia) to push and enthuse them

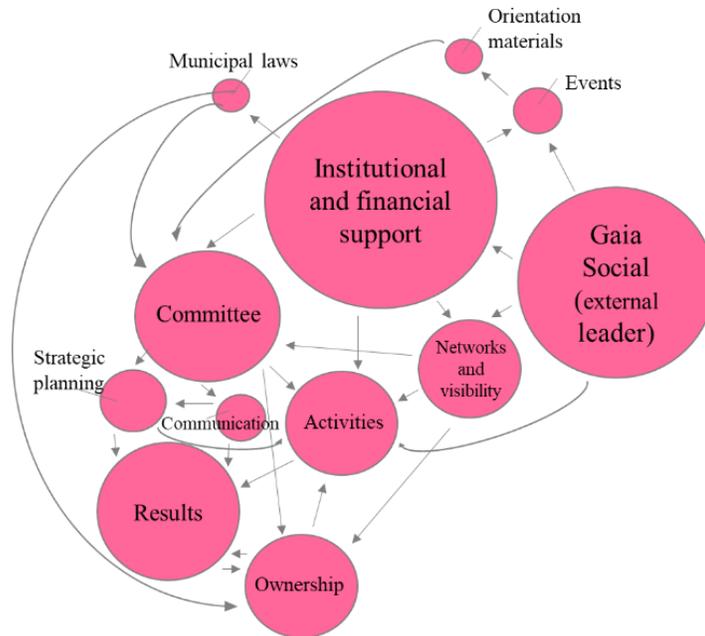


Figure 11. Relative significance and relationships among variables – local strategy and structure of SMEP implementation.

5. Commitment and positive feelings about education and community and Love for SMEP

A fifth and a sixth theme emerged in the analysis of each community and must be considered in the overall findings as well. The fifth one represents the *Commitment and positive feelings about the education and the community*, and the sixth one relates to *Love for SMEP*.

Aspects related to love and commitment of social mobilizers to education were present in all cases. Other aspects that were very common included their love for their work – usually as an educator – and the fact that they enjoy working with the population, indicating that these leaders usually were pleased to providing service to their communities. Both kinds of variables were significant in all the cases. Love for SMEP was a significant theme emergent in Goiatins, although there were traces of it in other places as well.

With these last two themes, I conclude this chapter, which presented the findings of the cross-case analysis. I found that each conceptual group of variables (themes) had significant influence in the leadership activism of social mobilizers, by motivating, enabling, discouraging,

or preventing the engagement of individuals or the implementation of SMEP activities in general. Within each theme, the variables were interconnected, sometimes influencing each other. Some variables stood out and were more significant than others.

I could also perceive variables interconnected and influencing others across the themes. Moreover, some aspects emerged in more than one theme, with different nuances, which suggested the identification of the most significant aspects influencing the engagement of social mobilizers of the EHR in a macroanalysis. In the next chapter I will discuss the findings presented in this chapter in relation to theory and literature, as well as the integration of the themes. I will also explore how these findings inform the success of SMEP and provide recommendations.

CHAPTER VIII – Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

A comunidade passa a valorizar a educação a partir do momento que o gestor valorizar. A partir do momento que esses gestores, a prefeita e a secretária, direcionam olhar de valorização para educação, aí é onde todo mundo fica empolgado para trabalhar.

[The community starts to value education as soon as the public manager values it. From the moment those managers, the mayor and the secretary, focus on valuing education, everyone gets excited to work.]

Maria José, social mobilizer and former MSE, Barra do Ouro

This study aimed at identifying factors affecting the leadership engagement of social mobilizers in implementing SMEP activities in the EHR. The findings confirmed the characterization of a social complexity, as described by Dryzek (2005). Answering my four research questions, I found that all the four conceptual groups or themes (sociodemographics, community capacity, power relations, and strategy and structure of local implementation) impacted the social mobilizers' activism and the development of SMEP in the studied communities in several ways. This in turn, influenced the effectiveness of SMEP. Passion for education and community was another emergent aspect that was significant for local activism, representing subjective aspects as those found by Wilson (2000) in volunteerism studies. Also, the analysis demonstrated that many variables influenced others within and across the conceptual groups, usually by causing, reinforcing, or constraining them. Some were also interdependent, while others reappeared in several groups.

In this final chapter, seeking to answer the research questions, I will discuss the main findings grounded in the conceptual framework of this study, by also situating them in the research literature and theoretical framework. Understanding that I already explored each conceptual group in more detail in the previous chapter, I now turn to discuss the most relevant

aspects that stood out across those concepts, which will help to better understand the complexity of factors affecting leadership engagement in SMEP. Based on those, I will also provide recommendations for future approaches and a brief analysis of how the findings inform the effectiveness of SMEP.

1. Results and Conclusions

1.1. A metanalysis – the most significant aspects affecting the SMEP’s leadership activism

As some authors had identified (Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Sen, 2000; Brennan, 2008), I also found that although motivations were fundamental, several capabilities were necessary for enabling the engagement of residents as social mobilizers, leading to the implementation of SMEP towards more participatory and democratic practices in their towns. Several aspects were motivational; others discouraged their activism. Other factors, however, played an even more crucial role because they either enabled, limited, or prevented the participation of individuals in the leadership of SMEP and their activism, regardless of their willingness or ability to engage.

By doing a brief analysis across the four conceptual groups of variables corresponding to my research questions, I found several aspects that stood out, showing high significance in influencing the SMEP’s leadership activism. Those give us clues about how to navigate the social complexity of the cases and interpret and explain the similarities and differences in the engagement of social mobilizers and the lifetime of SMEP in the EHR, grounded on the theoretical framework of this study.

The tables in the next page present a summary of the main findings. **Table 9** indicates aspects that contributed to the local leadership activism and the implementation of SMEP positively in the studied communities. **Table 10** represents factors that hindered the engagement of social mobilizers and the lifetime of the program. I will discuss them in the following sections.

Table 9. Aspects that supported the local leadership activism for SMEP and its implementation.

- Interaction motivated and built capacity for individual and collective engagement.
- The feeling of “collectivization” and being part of a community action nurtured activism.
- Weak ties and networks inside and outside the community inspired engagement and enhanced leadership skills and agency.
- Involvement in SMEP leadership privileged education experts; and passion for education, the field of work, and position (public leadership) represented predispositions to engagement.
- Local shared concerns / felt needs aligned to SMEP precepts drove activism.
- The shared imagery strongly motivated activism but was not enough to sustain it.
- Accountability for and belief in positive change inspired activism.
- Previous leadership experience facilitated activism.
- Local churches and external NGOs were central to develop community leadership and influenced activism for SMEP indirectly.
- Leading SMEP created opportunities for empowerment and development of skills, sense of agency, and connections, which enthused and enabled engagement.
- Community capacity and agency influenced activism positively for SMEP.
- Gaia Social and the process of implementing SMEP helped to build community leadership, capacity, and agency.
- The novelty of community action and civic engagement enthused participation.
- Higher community agency and support from the MSE enhanced local ownership for SMEP and engagement.
- Funding was crucial for maintaining activism and SMEP.
- Financial and institutional support from the local government was crucial for the execution of SMEP activities and the social mobilizers’ engagement.
- Locally / regionally based networks of support were more valuable to social mobilizers’ activism than BMEC’s national strategies.

Table 10. Aspects that hindered local leadership activism for SMEP and the program’s lifetime.

- Loss of social interaction hindered activism.
- Historically rooted cultural perceptions and contexts of low individual and collective participation challenged and hindered local engagement but also inspired the activism of social mobilizers.
- The capacity built through Gaia Social’s work and the process of implementing SMEP, in several cases, was not enough to sustain local activism and the lifetime of the program when the assistance of external agents ceased.
- The creation of municipal laws did not guarantee leadership engagement for SMEP or the implementation of activities and events.
- SMEP’s leadership development events and materials fostered reference, learning, interaction, and ideas, but were insufficient to induce action.
- Restricted, hierarchical, authoritarian leadership hindered or prevented participation.
- The absence of planning and the low frequency of the implementation of SMEP activities undermined individual and collective engagement of social mobilizers.
- Local and partisan politics, power disputes, and conflicts profoundly affected leadership activism, collaboration among players, and the lifetime of SMEP.
- Government officials (MSE/mayor) and variations in the local government strongly influenced the engagement of social mobilizers and SMEP’s implementation, mainly because of the community power structure and centralization of the SMEP Committee.
- The power structure of the communities (less pluralist, positional, rooted in partisan politics) privileged involvement of social mobilizers of political affinity with government officials and harmed the activism of those of different political parties.
- The use of visible and hidden power by superiors either enabled or hindered the engagement of social mobilizers and the implementation of SMEP.
- Local politics, power disputes, hierarchies, and dependency on government disempowered mobilizers.

1.1.1. Interaction

Social interaction was an essential source for motivating social mobilizers, confirming research literature and propositions of the interactional theory of community (Wilkison, 1991; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Korshing & Davison, 2013; Brennan et al, 2013; Olson & Brennan, 2018). It also enabled building capacity for individual and collective engagement in the local leadership of SMEP, as also found by several authors (Wilkison, 1991; Luloff & Bridger, 2002; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Brennan et al, 2013). When social interaction was lost or lessened among social mobilizers, their activism and the creation of SMEP activities were negatively impacted. Furthermore, social interaction was avoided when there was a conflicting relationship between players.

As anticipated by the precepts of the interactional theory of community (Wilkison, 1991; Brennan, 2008; Korshing and Davison, 2013), I found that social interaction was a great source of motivation and enthusiasm for acting because of several aspects, starting by allowing people to discover and discuss common concerns in their locality and between neighboring towns. SMEP workshops, events, and planning meetings created opportunities for discussing goals for enhancing parental engagement and collaboration between the community and schools and for preparing strategies to mobilize and accomplish these, as expected by BMEC. Moreover, the interaction with other social mobilizers and residents from inside and outside the communities enabled the recognition and identification of individuals with one another, creating a feeling of “collectivization,” as named by Toro and Werneck (1996), which boosted their activism. It also reflected the enhancement of the community field, researched by various authors (Wilkinson, 1991; Pigg, 1999; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Wituk et al, 2016).

The collective movement created for SMEP through the local and regional events and the

engagement of peers stimulated the activism of social mobilizers, as did seeing the community participating and enjoying the SMEP activities they created. Their engagement in the leadership of SMEP also fostered their sense of community, of belonging to a collective that shared concerns and worked for the common good, which enhanced their motivation, as also found by Summers (1986). Thus, leading and participating in a community action empowered them and fueled their engagement.

As also found by Granovetter (1985), Moran (2005), and Brennan & Luloff (2007), the development of weak ties enabled social mobilizers to access new knowledge, ideas, timely information, and a network for collaboration, which nurtured their engagement. Sharing experience, especially with other municipalities, was also a driver for participation, which was also seen by those authors. The development of new ties and friendship also boosted their self-confidence and enjoyment of participation, as also found in other studies (Putnam, 1993; Pigg, 1999; Flora & Flora, 2003).

The interaction between social mobilizers was also a critical step in organizing for the collective action, providing the basis for engagement. The social mobilizers developed leadership skills for SMEP, capacity for organizing, and agency through opportunities of sharing and learning from others, deliberating, planning and leading activities, working together, and splitting tasks. Some studies (Apaliyah et al., 2012; Emery et al., 2013) also found that enhanced leadership skills and knowledge about the community contributed to increasing community agency and capacity.

I found most social mobilizers and community members needed constant stimulus to keep engaged. For instance, frequent SMEP training, planning, and mobilizing activities were very important to keep the social mobilizers motivated and active. Thus, continuous social

interaction was vital, as suggested by Wilkinson (1991). Likewise, having an enthusiastic leadership in the SMEP Committee or a regional leader that followed up and guided them was very significant for active engagement, as also predicted by Toro and Werneck (1996).

When interaction did not take place or was interrupted, for whatever reason, it influenced the activism of social mobilizers negatively. I found that loss of interaction in the context of SMEP could result from several aspects across the conceptual groups of variables. Those included: the end of SMEP workshops and local planning meetings; SMEP activities developed more sparsely in the communities; lack of financial or local governmental support for the activities; change of government, leading to less focus on SMEP, loss of connection or interest in the program, or sabotage to political opposites; local politics preventing individuals from participating in the leadership of SMEP; loss of engagement because of change in job position; different frames of individuals regarding who owns SMEP; respect to hierarchies; perception of needing an invitation to get involved; and the withdrawal of Gaia Social – who usually gathered the social mobilizers – from the work in the EHR. The absence of social interaction led to the disconnection of social mobilizers, loss of their enthusiasm and reference for action, and loss of collaboration and community action.

1.1.2. Local needs, strong imagery, passion for education, and field of work

A central aspect that motivated the engagement of all social mobilizers in leading SMEP was the alignment of the program's purpose with local felt needs. Wilkinson (1991) and social movement scholars (Gohn, 2008; Nettle, 2015) already predicted that shared concerns about the locality are precursors and motivators of action. In the case of SMEP, the program offered the communities a strong imagery of improving the local education through higher family involvement and collaboration with the schools. This was a shared concern in the region,

especially by education professionals. According to Toro and Werneck (1996), developing a strong imagery (or central purpose and vision) is key for creating solid motives for self-engaging and mobilizing others, as I can confirm. Those authors and Wilson (2000) also pointed out passion as a critical ingredient for the success of the mobilization work, which I found as another significant variable driving the activism of social mobilizers.

Both local felt needs and love for education were related directly to the position and field of work of social mobilizers, which, in turn, are other two central variables that almost conditioned the engagement of individuals in the leadership of SMEP in the EHR. Because of the local strategies for implementing SMEP, I found that education experts, working in leadership positions linked to the local government (MDE or schools) were more likely to be appointed as social mobilizers and to stay engaged longer. They shared a passion for education and dreams and concerns about the future of the children in their community. Also, they knew the reality and challenges of education in their towns, which naturally led them to recognize the importance of SMEP and to take ownership for its implementation, especially in the public schools. Authors who studied municipal councils (Jacobi, 2002; Dominguez, 2007; Sousa Coelho, 2012) in Brazil also noticed the predominance of experts in those spaces.

As anticipated by Freire (1970), the willingness to see the betterment of local education, the recognition that positive changes should be taken in their communities and the hope that those were possible, as well as their belief that they could contribute to building such a transformation, reinforced the social mobilizer's purpose and stimulated their activism through SMEP. As already mentioned, the engagement of others and community action also strengthened the shared imagery. Finally, seeing positive results of their efforts also developed a sense that they were in the right path, as also observed by Toro and Werneck (1996). This increased their

sense of agency and empowered them both individually and collectively, as anticipated by Freire (1970) and Korsching & Davidson (2013). However, having a passion and a shared imagery was not enough to keep their activism alive due to other influencing factors.

1.1.3. Leadership – local and external agents

Leadership was an essential capacity required for the success of the local implementation of SMEP. Having had previous experience in being a leader and having strong local leadership to follow for the implementation of SMEP enabled and fostered the activism of social mobilizers. Other studies (Payne & Bennett, 1999; Shiarella et al., 2000; Netle, 2015) also found previous leadership linked to actual participation or intended future participation. Several social mobilizers were already leaders in their communities or had participated in projects or programs that provided social services for the community. Besides the experience gained in working in municipal government agencies and programs, two kinds of organizations were central for developing community leadership: the local churches and the outside NGOs. I found that the most engaged and enthusiastic SMEP leaders actively participated in education programs developed by the NGOs or coordinated their projects locally in the past.

I also found that having an internal or external leadership for implementing SMEP activities was crucial to motivate and enable the engagement of social mobilizers and their partners and to keep it alive, as suggested by Toro and Werneck (1996) and found in other studies of leadership and engagement (Apaliyah et al, 2012; Emery et al, 2013; Wituk, 2014). In the internal case, the role was played by those social mobilizers with more active, positive, and enthusiastic leadership (who usually were at the lead of the local SMEP Committees) and by the MSE - the most powerful player in the local education. This local leadership was essential for enabling, recruiting, gathering, and motivating the involvement of social mobilizers, as well as

for organizing, planning, and executing the activities and the collective action related to SMEP. This effort may have been reflected in both the development *of* and *in* the community in EHR.

When leaders were actively engaged in implementing SMEP activities, with a lively, inclusive, and more shared leadership, the activism of other social mobilizers was nurtured and enhanced, as also indicated by Toro and Werneck (1996) and Hustedde & Woodward (1996). When the activism of such leaders decreased, the engagement of other social mobilizers was also affected negatively. On the other hand, if centralized, more vertical, and sometimes authoritarian local SMEP leadership was used, it would impair or prevent the participation of individuals. This also lead to the conclusion that the centralization of the local SMEP Committee on the MDE (which reflected the power structure of the communities) could have been both positive or negative to the activism of social mobilizers and the success of the implementation of the program, depending on the attitude and posture of the MSE or the leader of the committee. Jacobi (1999) and Sousa Coelho (2012) also found this dual reality when studying other participatory spaces that were centralized on the local government in Brazil.

The external leadership, represented by Gaia Social and the main BMEC's representative, was also very significant for the implementation of SMEP, being acknowledged by most participants. Besides gathering residents and providing training for community leadership development and guidance for the implementation of the SMEP activities, those players had an essential role in the development of a sense of agency of social mobilizers, empowering them as important assets to their communities. Through this role, which was also highlighted by Toro and Werneck (1996) and Emery et al (2013), they enthused the social mobilizers and insisted in making them believe that they could make a difference in their communities. They made the local leaders believe that, through their engagement, they could achieve the imagery of

mobilizing the community to become more participative and improve local education.

The subjects of this study also expressed that having an external agent that was continually following up with them, monitoring their activities, guiding and supporting their organization, and encouraging them was necessary for keeping their activism alive. In most of the communities, the individual and collective engagement was significantly affected when Gaia Social left the region and after the social mobilizers lost contact with the BMEC team, reflecting the need for a continuous stimulus or external encouragement. Cross-sector initiatives and actions of NGOs were also recognized by others (Hustedde and Woodward, 1996; Avritzer, 2008; Emery et al., 2013) as allies in developing local leadership and individual and community agency.

Although those external leaders supported developing local leadership, capacity, and ownership for SMEP, the issue of demobilization (loss of activism of social mobilizers and the end of the implementation of SMEP activities) was higher in the communities after they left the region. One assumption is that maybe those capacity-building efforts were too short or insufficient for developing the skills needed for promoting significant change in the behavior and mindset of the individuals, or for breaking local politics and power issues. Also, the approach used may have been wrong, creating a certain dependence on the support of the external leaders. There were also significant cultural, structural, and power barriers in the communities that the local leadership for SMEP had to face and overcome to be able to engage, remain active, and implement the activities I will examine in the next sections.

1.1.4. Cultural aspects and community agency

This study confirmed the perception of several authors (Freire, 1970; Toro & Werneck, 1996; Jacobi, 2002; Sousa Coelho, 2002; Milani, 2008) of the need for social participation to

overcome several socio political and cultural conditions. The communities of the EHR have a historical, cultural context of low individual and collective agency, so SMEP with its hands-on approach of civic engagement, public work (Boyte, 2004), and community action represented a novel process that both challenged and enthused the social mobilizers. SMEP activities and events both motivated and helped develop community capacity and agency, which were necessary for overcoming cultural barriers and changing behaviors, although these were not enough to promote sustained activism or to break local power structures. Communities with already higher agency and support from the local government also had more significant involvement in SMEP, more inclusive and diverse leadership, and more lasting activism (even if not very organized), showing a dual relationship between community capacity and the implementation of SMEP activities.

Almost all the participants of this study identified the existence of cultural challenges to participation of their communities, as those described by some authors (Toro & Werneck, 1996; Freire, 1970; Jacobi, 2002), even among the social mobilizers. The challenges both inspired and discouraged the activism of the social mobilizers. They also revealed the mobilization as a new experience and difficult volunteer work.

These challenges were mainly related to the passivity of the population, which is not used to engagement and expected the local government to provide social services for the betterment of their community. Participants also believed that the population had the same perception regarding public schools: that they are responsible for the education of the children with little need for parental involvement. This reflects the perspective of citizens as “clients” of the government instead of co-creators of the public good, disengaged from public work (Boyte, 2004; Fischer, 2000). I also confirmed the perception of “public” as something that is free of

charge or that is a property or duty of the government, which made the communities accept and acknowledge SMEP as a natural responsibility of the MDE. Other cultural challenges that affected the engagement of the social mobilizers and others are related to the local power structure and paying respect to that, including obeying the hierarchies inside the positional system in which the leadership of SMEP was also included.

Finally, another challenge I found refers to the frames of local individuals regarding SMEP, which may have impacted the involvement of individuals, as observed by Lewicki (2001) in other scenarios. One typical frame, which was also reinforced by the process of the local implementation of SMEP in the EHR, relates to the ownership of SMEP. Often, individuals perceived SMEP as a public policy whose implementation should occur through the leadership of the local government instead of the civil society. Other divergent perceptions I found among players referred to who should carry out the SMEP activities and how, which in some cases hindered collaboration and local official support. Finally, although SMEP calls for a higher parental participation and co-responsibility and collaboration among players, there were signs of different frames between parents and schools regarding education and who should provide it in all the cases. Other authors also found that the novelty of social participation structures to both the state and civil society created resistance from both sides in Brazil (Jacobi, 2002; Coelho 2007). This study suggests, then, that the very perception of SMEP, education, and the individual's roles, which is rooted in the local culture, may have affected the attitude, engagement, and collaboration of residents and social mobilizers.

In this cultural context, the presence of external agents working with local leaders (social mobilizers) and the very proposition of SMEP, with its events and implementation of activities, helped stimulate engagement, connecting people and organizing local leadership to engage

others and nurture more participation in the communities (at least in education), building local capacity, as also found in other studies (Hustedde & Woodwardm 1996; Emery et al, 2013).

These efforts invited more participatory citizenship, through the engagement in public work for the betterment of the local education.

1.1.5. Civic engagement, ownership, and empowerment

The novelty of being engaged was very motivational to the social mobilizers, and it seemed that the more they got involved, the more excited they became with the experience and enjoyed participating in SMEP. In general, their activism created opportunities for empowerment at the individual and the community level, as defined by Zimmerman (2012), which in turn, also enthused participation. Experiencing that they could break the passivity and organize themselves to develop actions that could mobilize the whole community was very empowering for the social mobilizers, developing both the *power with* and the *power to* (provoke change), as suggested by Rowlands (1997). Seeing the residents participating in a cause they have advocated and sought for solutions for a long time was very rewarding for them and helped to develop their sense of self-efficacy, as mentioned by Toro and Werneck (1996). Taking action and seeing positive change, as well as the great satisfaction of working with others for the common good, helped to develop their agency, as predicted by Freire (1970) and Fischer (2000).

The ownership of SMEP was strengthened when the community already carried higher agency and when the MSE was supportive and more actively involved, reflecting patterns of the local power structure that could affect engagement positively or negatively. Also, activism in the communities was more likely to last when the schools got involved and continued developing activities regardless of the official status of the program. The involvement of the schools was essential for the movement to gain force and for the sustainability of the SMEP propositions in

the communities. Such ownership of SMEP was also reflected in the early success of the program in a second level of community engagement. This ownership transcended the activism of the initial leadership of the program. The education professionals were crucial in leading this process and maintaining activism for greater parental involvement in education. Several were also assuming SMEP practices more organically into their professional routines. In some of those cases, the single action – or public work – of social mobilizers represented their empowerment over local politics or power structures and issues that hindered or prevented their participation in the official leadership of SMEP. Moreover, the second level of engagement could be seen in cases when individuals from other social fields started applying the ideas and strategies of mobilization to other programs, themes, and issues, recognizing the importance of higher participation of the residents for the betterment of their well-being. It was also seen by the increased engagement of the community, including the advocacy of the students.

The dynamics of getting engaged, organizing collective action, taking ownership of SMEP, and seeing the results of their efforts enthused and developed the social mobilizers' agency and empowered them individually and collectively (Freire, 1970; Toro & Werneck, 1996; Zimmerman, 2012). Seeing positive results from their efforts, such as the participation of the community, higher parental involvement, improvements in the schools and its relationship with the community, the different posture of the teachers, and better performance and behavior of students in the schools were also key to encouraging their engagement. However, again, this motivation itself did not sustain their activism.

1.1.6. Choices in the strategy and structure of the local implementation of SMEP

Regardless of the willingness of social mobilizers to engage, several aspects linked to the specificities of the strategy and the structure of the local implementation of SMEP were

significant to enable and limit their involvement, their activism, and the very development and sustainability of SMEP activities in the communities in the EHR. Those include mainly: local strategies of anchoring SMEP and its leadership; aspects of funding; local, regional, and external networks of support; and strategic planning and decisions regarding what kind of activities to engage in and their frequency was central.

As a top-down policy or program proposed by the federal government, it seemed natural that the local leadership of SMEP would be anchored at the local governmental agency accountable for education, the MDE, as are other public policies. The very BMEC' strategy of having the MDE as the focal point for requesting the local implementation of SMEP reinforced this. Such a strategy also easily suited the *positional power structure* (Lyon, 2012) of the communities. Moreover, the need for local funding for the development of SMEP activities created even more dependency of the program on the local government, as also observed by Jacobi (1999) and Sousa Coelho (2012) in other spaces in Brazil. Gaia Social also reinforced this strategy by negotiating local funding from mayors and MSEs for SMEP events and activities developed by the social mobilizers in the communities.

In several aspects, this situation explains the greater success or longevity of the implementation of SMEP in the communities that had a stronger and lasting institutional and financial support from the local government. Gaia Social had a substantial role in nurturing the activism for SMEP during the transitional political times (first two years of implementation), when new governors were assuming the lead of the communities and commanding the job rotation in public positions that enabled the leadership activism of several social mobilizers. With the withdrawal of Gaia Social from the region, the turnover of MSEs, and new municipal elections, the official support to the SMEP activities faded over time, as well as the activism of

social mobilizers.

In some communities, the creation of laws that celebrated SMEP or the integration of its activities in the school calendar contributed to the longevity of the program, still dependent on the support of the local government. On the other hand, when public schools took ownership of SMEP, they were able to keep the discourse, precepts, and strategies of the program alive in their routines towards increasing parental involvement, even when the official implementation of the policy was over – or nobody talked more about SMEP.

The creation of support networks for the implementation of SMEP activities was more valuable at the local and regional level than through the national strategies of connection created by BMEC. The compartmentalization of agencies and areas in the local government facilitated the engagement of education experts as social mobilizers, but SMEP and the community field gained force when professionals from other areas (especially health and social work) were also invited and involved in carrying out its activities in the first two years of its implementation. Such networks were stronger in places with higher community agency. However, social mobilizers from other fields were the first ones to disengage due to cultural, political, and power-structure issues. Finally, Gaia Social also fostered the development of a network of social mobilizers to collaborate across the communities, which enthused them, boosted their confidence to participate, and allowed the development of new ties, knowledge, and skills. Working with other municipalities also brought pride and visibility to social mobilizers and local politicians and enhanced their commitment towards SMEP. However, such networks were not sustained after the NGO left the region.

The need for guidance, encouragement, and planning for implementing SMEP was explicit in all the cases. As observed by Nettle (2016) in social movements, I found that the

leadership engagement for SMEP needed references of activities in order to develop. Among all the documents, materials, and platforms provided by BMEC, the SMEP booklet was the most effective. It was very important for the work of social mobilizers in approaching the community and imparting their messages for enhanced participation. However, I also noticed that the local knowledge, creativity, shared ideas, and the experiences of social mobilizers were important assets for addressing the education issues, attracting the public, and enabling their participation in SMEP, as also defended by Fischer (2000). Developing their versions and approaches for the activities, by using their local knowledge to attract the community and to involve them in school life, was very motivational and empowering, as discussed by Freire (1970) and Fischer.

Gaia Social also played an essential role in encouraging the organization of the local SMEP Committees, which, in turn, were crucial for organizing, planning, guiding the collective work of the social mobilizers, and stimulating the development of ownership of SMEP. The local SMEP Committees also legitimized the practice of social mobilizers and gave them visibility. They were also crucial for bringing other players and power holders of the community to know and to support SMEP, including influencing the creation of laws and the integration of SMEP activities into other programs. However, such strategies were not always successful. Moreover, the success of the local SMEP Committee in enabling or encouraging the activism of the social mobilizers also depended on local politics and the attitude, posture, and approach of those in the leadership of that organization.

Finally, the kind of activities (attractive or not) and their frequency influenced the engagement of social mobilizers and others by nurturing interactions, encouraging through collective engagement, and showing results of community participation, among others. Although Toro and Werneck (1996) pointed out that social mobilization should not be confused with

occasional events or campaigns, these were those that precisely enthused the social mobilizers. The big SMEP events, full of activities – like the SMEP Day, which mobilized a significant part of the community and generated a big movement in the towns, excited the social mobilizers and the residents. However, the time gap between such activities was found to be an issue leading to disengagement and weakening of SMEP. I also believe that such a gap affected the development of local agency and capacity negatively. As Toro and Werneck (1996) predicted, when mobilization action was restricted to occasional events, the leadership activism for SMEP was likely to lose force over time. In contrast, in places where mobilization activities were integrated into the routines of the schools and other programs, and incorporated by professionals from education and other areas, the precepts of SMEP thrived. In the second case, more than a governmental program, SMEP was diluted to become the public work of citizens, following the ideals of a participatory democracy, where different players kept making efforts to engage others (including the students) to participate in the construction of better education in their towns.

1.1.7. The community power structure and local politics

A final critical aspect enabling or preventing the involvement and activism of social mobilizers in the communities of EHR was power and politics, which was also observed as obstacles to social participation in studies of other spaces in Brazil (Oliveira 1996; Jacobi, 1999, 2002; Milani, 2008; Sousa Coelho, 2012). Local politics and power disputes are central in the culture of these communities and set the rules in many aspects. The power structure of the community is established depending on the job positions people have, particularly in the governmental system. It is less pluralist and highly positional, privileging those in higher public offices and prompting political disputes. Supporting Lyon and Driskell's (2012) discoveries, I found that the decision-making in those small towns is concentrated in the hands of mid-level

administrators (such as the MSs), instead of top-level community leaders. This is evidenced inside the field those administrators are accountable for, such as public education in the case of SMEP.

Such context profoundly influenced the development of SMEP's activities, leadership, and sustainability. SMEP activities and the involvement of social mobilizers were usually vulnerable to the decision-making, attitude, and support of local authorities (particularly the mayor and MSEs) and variations in the local government, which were aggravated at the election time. Corruption and self-interest were also salient among such politicians. Also, being in political opposition to those in office usually lead to loss of power. Individuals are shifted to less prestigious job positions, lose official support (institutional and financial), and have their projects sabotaged (even when they benefit the community).

In this way, the use of the first and the second dimensions of power (visible and hidden power), as proposed by Gaventa (1988, 2006), can be seen in the context of SMEP. They either enable or hinder the engagement of social mobilizers and the implementation of the program. In this case, the use of the first dimension of power can be seen when those with local authority made decisions regarding who would be part of SMEP's leadership (recruiting people to become social mobilizers and appointing the SMEP Committee), the position of individuals in the system – job rotation (assigning individuals to specific job positions), whether activities would be developed and by whom, and the provision of institutional and financial support.

The second dimension of power is represented by the politics and power disputes that are not often apparent. Those include power holders setting SMEP's agenda according to their self-interest and visibility, terminating the activism of those of political opposition, and preventing the involvement of those who could mean a threat to their position and power, such as in cases

where the social mobilizers were sabotaged because of “political jealousy.”

1.1.8. Summary of main considerations

In general, this study demonstrates that the **positive activism** of social mobilizers was more associated with a group of specific factors. These included passion for education; acknowledging SMEP’s purposes and believing in its precepts; being in a favorable job position (especially in leadership in education) where they had higher chances of being invited or appointed to participate; having a good political relationship with local power holders (especially government officials); receiving institutional and financial support from the local government; having enthusiastic and inclusive leadership, encouragement, guidance, and collective organization; receiving constant incentive from external partners – making them believe they could do it, acknowledging their work, and receiving support and guidance for developing leadership and organizational skills; living in a community with higher agency; being part of a greater, regional collaborative network; developing SMEP events more frequently or incorporating SMEP activities into their professional routines – especially at schools; perceiving positive results of their efforts, leading them to feel rewarded and empowered by engaging in a collective and being able to evoke positive change.

Several things **motivated** the engagement of the social mobilizers in their leadership of SMEP activities. These included: interactions, shared concerns, a strong imagery, passion for education, the enthusiastic and inclusive leadership of others, the engagement of a whole collective, and the very experience of civic engagement for the betterment of their communities, from which they could perceive positive results and feel like a contributor.

Moreover, the process of the implementation of SMEP challenged **cultural aspects** of low agency and attitudes and behavior, reflecting the “customers of the government” perspective.

Individual capabilities and community capacity needed to be developed or stretched, mainly linked to community leadership, organizing, and agency. These were built through SMEP events, training, and activities, interaction, and exchange with other players, the experience of organizing and participating in collective action, besides Gaia Social's support and projects.

Several **challenges interrupted or hindered** the development of local capacity, such as the withdrawal of Gaia Social, the lack of communication of BMEC with the social mobilizers, a lack of financial resources, the scarcity and sparsity of SMEP activities, and mostly, the local politics and power relations, which hindered or prevented the participation of individuals. Constant changes in the local government also weakened the institutional and financial support to SMEP activities and its leadership.

Other factors **enabled** activism and social participation. Places with governmental support to SMEP activities; a positive, shared and enthusiastic leadership; and a high number of individuals taking the lead, above political differences and incorporating SMEP more frequently in their routines and the school calendar, thrived on SMEP activities and enabled more individuals to engage, including in the second level of engagement – beyond the initial social mobilizers. This increased community involvement, including from and in other social fields, also represented a higher chance of success of SMEP's implementation.

In sum, this study has been confirmed to be a **social complexity** (Dryzek, 2005), where several combined variables influenced the engagement of social mobilizers in the leadership of SMEP positively or negatively. It showed that several aspects of community capacity, democratic participation, and the strategies and structure of the local implementation motivated active involvement, while others represented existent or developed capabilities of community organizing to provoke change, which often were developed during the very process of the

collective action for SMEP. Moreover, aspects related to the sociodemographic characteristics of the social mobilizers, local politics, community power structure and relations, and some structural factors of anchoring the leadership of SMEP in the local government were stronger in enabling or preventing the participation of individuals.

I can confirm several aspects pointed out by Toro and Werneck (1996) that encouraged or hindered the engagement of individuals in a social mobilization work. However, the critiques to their approach were also accurate. The authors mostly relied on the willingness of people to get involved and to engage others, not considering the political dimension and the influence of power relations and the specificities of each community. The study also confirmed the generation of individual and collective power when people experience and can organize collectively for producing or enhancing their common good, as suggested by several scholars of empowerment (Freire, 1970; Rowlands, 1997; Adams, 2008; Brennan & Israel 2009; Zimmerman, 2012) and propositions of participatory democracy (Fischer, 2000; Boyte, 2004). Social interaction, individual and collective agency, and community capacity building are also essential to create motives and develop capabilities for engagement and the collective action, as suggested by the interactional theory and other studies (Wilkison, 1991; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Brennan & Luloff, 2007; Korshing & Davison, 2013; Brennan et al, 2013; Olson & Brennan, 2018). Cultural aspects, local politics, and power relations and the power structure of the community represented challenges to capacity building and individual and collective engagement, often enabling or preventing participation and collaboration, as predicted by several authors in the power literature (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Freire, 1970; Lukes, 1974; Gaventa, 1988, 2006; Brennan & Israel, 2009; Lyon et al., 2010; Lyon, 2012).

2. Recommendations

2.1. Introduction

Based on the findings I have discussed, I will provide some recommendations to SMEP and other policies and programs that involve social participation, community leadership development, and the development *in and of* communities, as well as related future research.

The experience of SMEP in the EHR shows that, to be effective, policy and program makers should create invited spaces that not only encourage initial or sporadic participation, but that are able to foster and sustain collective engagement over time. Social participation needs to be crafted and nurtured continuously, especially in cultural and political settings where citizens were historically dissociated from public life and usually have little experience with individual and collective engagement.

This study demonstrated that participation is challenging, even among community leaders. The results showed that only motivating and training local leaders for advocacy and mobilization is not enough for guaranteeing their voluntary engagement and sustained activism. Thus, programs focused on developing leadership, community, and collective action must be aware of that and use other strategies and mechanisms for fostering sustained engagement. One strategy the findings indicate is establishing stable local and regional structures or strengthening existing ones, could encourage, enable, organize, and support the local leadership activism and the engagement of other residents over time.

Moreover, this study showed the importance of the local context and conditions for individual and collective engagement. Challenges to participation are accentuated in localities with low individual and collective agency, lack of experience with engagement and organizing, few community organizations, limited financial resources, high concentration of power

(especially by the government), and strong local politics, such as those in the EHR. The case of SMEP suggests that policymakers and practitioners should build local capacity for individual and collective engagement for local problem-solving and the public good, by combining the development of leadership and community education, strategies, and structures.

These initiatives should evoke motivations for engagement, develop individual and collective capabilities, and create enabling strategies that would minimize the influence of factors that may prevent participation. Based on the findings of this study, discussed in the previous section, I recommend policy and program makers to be attentive and focus efforts on some specific aspects.

As for the strategy of local implementation of the program, policy and program makers should organize or strengthen a local structure to take ownership and concentrate the local leadership for collective action. The local leadership structure should be inclusive, active, and enthusiastic. It should also enable and foster a democratic and empowered participation of the members and be disconnected from the local power structure – if that is less pluralistic. Policy and program makers should provide support systems to assist local leaders in managing actions and provide funding for the development of the activities.

Program and policy leaders should foster continuous opportunities for social interaction, deliberation, and the enhancement of social resources (relationships and networks) for motivating individual engagement and enabling the development of capabilities for collective action and collaboration. Additionally, they should also motivate participation by focusing their work on important locally felt needs and concerns and supporting the creation of a strong purpose for collective action for addressing them. They should also seize the passion and experiences of local experts and leaders to develop leading activism for engaging the whole

community.

Moreover, for enhancing the local capacity and independence from external development agents, policy and program makers should focus on developing solid programs for community leadership development, which not only focus on how to implement the policy, but that also develops skills in planning, community building, and organizing. They should also develop regional leadership to support and bring together the local leaders, allowing the development of skills, exchange of experiences, and a sense of “collectivization.” Finally, they should consider partnering with NGOs to enhance the work of building local capacity.

In the next section, I will provide more practical recommendations regarding each of those aspects. Taken as a whole, they inform a more effective design and implementation of programs that foster community leadership and engagement, such as SMEP.

2.2. Practical recommendations for policy and practices

Investment in the development of local leadership is crucial for the success of the implementation of programs or policies like SMEP, for the sustainability of practices, and for building local capacity for action. The findings of this study suggest that for developing leadership in places such as the EHR, policymakers and community development practitioners should use strategies that are locally based, which would be more tangible and focused on the reality of the leaders, instead of broader strategies (such as virtual networks, for instance). Also, the findings imply that, in such places of low community agency and little experience in individual and collective engagement, policy and program makers should use a combination of strategies for developing vigorous community leadership. These include pieces of training, periodic encouragement and technical assistance, opportunities for interaction, development of connections and networks, setting a local organization for accountability, and the very practice of

engaging and organizing collective actions. The focus of the efforts should be on developing a community leadership that is enthusiastic, inclusive, strong, organized, active, skilled, and that follows a sharing approach.

Also, the findings of this study demonstrated that it is important that policymakers and practitioners give attention to the specifics of each community and tailor their proposals according to the local needs, structures, and assets in order to enhance the success of the program and local ownership for it. Based on those, they should generate strong imagery that is significant and empowering for the community. The imagery should attract the participation of residents in the program and facilitate their engagement and ownership for action. As a suggestion, in the planning phase, policy and program makers could organize local community forums to assess the primary local needs and align the purpose and content (or curriculum) of the program to meet them. They should also have a notion of the level of local agency, key cultural aspects, and local structures and dynamics for developing contents and strategies that are locally appropriate, increasing the chances of the success of the program. To navigate the local realities, program makers should engage experienced or acknowledged local leaders. Those could also assist in identifying past experiences, practices, and social projects developed by or in the community in order to avoid mistakes, obtain ideas from what was successful or find potential partners.

Moreover, policymakers and community development practitioners should understand the local power structure of the communities. They should analyze it to identify both positive aspects and potential barriers for enabling more inclusive and active participation in a locality. That will allow them to choose strategies for the implementation of their programs or policies that are more democratic and long-lasting, and that are appropriate to empower more citizens or

to distribute power locally. The identification of local power holders, which could promote or prevent the implementation of projects and the participation of individuals, is also central, so program makers can negotiate their support instead of putting them as central in the decision-making.

Also, as for recruitment, instead of asking for local power holders to select participants for the leadership development programs, as happened in the case of SMEP in the EHR, program makers and development practitioners should identify and invite acknowledged or potential leaders (positional and reputational) that have a positive influence in the community. They should start by recruiting those leaders and professionals that are specialists in that social field. The case of SMEP showed the importance of education professionals in leading its implementation. Their passion, belief, experience, commitment, and knowledge supported and boosted their activism for educating and engaging others in their community. It was also easier for these professionals to incorporate SMEP's precepts into their regular work and routines. Also, the activism and ownership for SMEP benefited from the social mobilizers' previous leadership experience, such as several years of public service and involvement or leading other social projects in their community.

Furthermore, policy and program makers should also recruit community acknowledged leaders or committed individuals from other social fields to integrate the team. This would support the development *of* the community and of local networks of collaboration that are crucial for building local capacity. The findings of this study showed that interaction, new ties, and networks of collaboration enhanced the feeling of "collectivization", inspired engagement, and enhanced community leadership skills and agency. On the other hand, the findings also showed that the sustained involvement of individuals of other social fields can be impaired by

political-cultural barriers in communities, such as boundaries between professional areas and avoidance of meddling in other people's work. In this way, it is vital that recruitment, curriculum, and the structure of local implementation of the program enable, support, and offer practical resources for those joining, in order to ownership of leadership activism and remain active.

Furthermore, policy and program makers should avoid recruiting only individuals who work in the government. They should expand the local network of collaboration by making efforts to include individuals of other sectors of society and local organizations. This is important in order to begin challenging the mainstream perception of citizens as customers of the government and prompting the community for public work. Promoting more diversity in program participation would enhance community leadership skills and foster engagement more broadly in the community. It would contribute towards a more pluralistic power structure, greater reach of the mobilization actions, and increased community agency.

The findings also show that, especially in communities with a low agency, leadership activism and participation will have to be continuously nurtured to build capacity. Just as engagement invites a new attitude, it is challenged by the conventional mindset of non-participation. So, program makers should also plan strategies for supporting and encouraging the activism of those leaders for a longer period until engagement becomes more natural, taking the local context into consideration. This study found that experiencing civic engagement and leading community organizing motivated activism and enhanced leadership skills locally. Moreover, the leadership activism was boosted when individuals perceived an increased participation of the community members due to their efforts.

The findings also indicated that the activism of individuals might influence the

engagement of peers positively, which could result in the involvement of a higher diversity of residents. Moreover, in the case of SMEP, diverse representation in its leadership should be considered to comply with its purpose of enhancing the participation of citizens in democratic practices and collaboration of the whole community. SMEP understands that both experts (schools, education professionals, government) and citizens (family and community) are co-responsible for the provision and the betterment of education. In this way, BMEC or facilitators (as Gaia Social) could have recruited, for instance, representatives of each neighborhood, church, and school as focal points for the mobilization actions, in addition to teachers, parents, and students.

Program makers could also map existing projects, initiatives, and community organizations for identifying local leaders and opportunities of local partnerships for action. These assets can support or take ownership of the actions proposed by the program or policy, as well as offer complementary practices that could strengthen or be strengthened by them. One example from the cases of this study was the integration of mobilization activities with other projects developed by the NGOs, schools, and local government. This study showed that the implementation of SMEP activities would have strongly benefited if schools and teachers were targeted for its leadership. Moreover, BMEC, Gaia Social, and the local leadership should have actively employed efforts to get higher and organized involvement of local churches in SMEP. The findings showed that churches are key to the development of local leadership and social projects in the region, reaching many people. Thus, faith-based organizations could have become assets for expanding and sustaining the mobilization actions, including by integrating them into their regular initiatives.

As for the structure for local implementation, it is crucial to develop an appropriate

strategy for creating local accountability and ownership for the program and its activities. The findings of this study suggest the importance of having or establishing a local institution to reunite and organize the work of the local leaders, such as the local SMEP Committee. This institution could be created or be represented by existing community organizations (such as schools in the EHR). It should function as a specialized committee for organizing the local leadership and planning and implementing the activities and also train others. Such organizations could also set examples for the work on other issues in the community.

To enhance and sustain leadership activism, the findings also suggest that the local leadership institutions must be active and organized and receive systematic orientation and support for the development and implementation of strategic planning and its evaluation from policymakers or practitioners. Also, local leaders should be prepared for teamwork, to run such institutions, to maintain its focus, and to raise its strengths.

Moreover, policymakers, when proposing programs such as SMEP, must support the communities with funding for the development of the work, especially for transportation, which will enable the constant inclusion of the more remote neighborhoods and collaboration with adjacent towns. Policymakers should provide funding directly to the leadership organizations (local committee, schools, or others) responsible for implementing the program, which should render accounts according to their goals and activities and application of funds. Moreover, the program should be organized and implemented systematically and strategically for enhancing its efficiency and local accountability. For instance, BMEC could create a platform for SMEP where each local leadership organization would establish goals, set planning, implementation, and evaluation strategies, indicators of success, and a schedule of activities, as well as report action and results regularly. BMEC should train the social mobilizers in strategic

planning, development of activities, and evaluation, as well as the use of that instrument, and be available for assistance.

With those measures, policymakers would also foster a more institutionalized structure for local implementation, opening different alternatives for the municipalities to access and participate in the program. This study demonstrated that the previous strategy used by BMEC favored centralization of the local leadership organization (SMEP Committee) on the local government (MDE), which influenced activism and the program lifetime either positively or negatively, depending mainly on municipal institutional and financial support. Policy (SMEP) implementation became vulnerable to the attitude of local authorities, availability of public funds, local politics, power games, and variations in the local government because the structure that BMEC suggested for its local implementation was loose and voluntary. The local implementation became, then, subordinate to the positional power structure of the community. On the contrary, the institutionalized version of SMEP implementation should be more effective. The policymakers would provide resources and coordinated support to the local leadership organization. Such an organization, in turn, must report and render accounts to the Ministry, disconnecting the implementation from the influence of power holders.

In this scenario, possible alternatives for accessing the implementation of the program could be through the governmental system or applications of community organizations. In the first case, SMEP could become a formal federal program under the same regulations as other official programs and would have the MDE or local schools as the local accountable institution. Based on the findings of this study, I strongly suggest that BMEC invests in public schools as the local organizations to lead SMEP. In the second scenario, SMEP could be accessed through a competitive fellowship for community organizations (existent or to be created). In both cases, the

policymaker should create rules that foster an inclusive local leadership, taking into consideration the aspects I discussed earlier. Still, BMEC could also opt for another direction, which would be to incorporate SMEP activities and precepts in the curriculum of other government programs and policies, which could then facilitate activism as suggested by some experiences developed by social mobilizers in the studied cases.

Furthermore, training for developing leadership for the local implementation of policies and programs, such as the SMEP workshops, should be more comprehensive, as findings suggest. It should go beyond guiding individuals in policy implementation and technical aspects linked to its theme and goals. Programs should also develop skills that will enable or enrich the work that the leaders will develop in the community, enhancing capacity, and creating less dependence on the support of external agents. Based on the experience of SMEP, I suggest that the curriculum also includes organizing, mobilizing and communication skills, project development, fundraising, notions of strategic planning, tools for evaluation, participatory practices for local assessments, problem-solving, and negotiation. Also, community development practitioners should develop activities that enable the emergent leaders to critically analyze their realities regarding power relations, in a safe space, where they could collectively think of possible alternatives that foster democratic participation and challenge disempowering local structures instead of conforming to them.

Additionally, this study has confirmed previous research and theory regarding interaction as an essential source for developing motivations and capabilities for individual and collective engagement in a locality. Practices should foster continuous opportunities for social interaction. Therefore, the frequency of training, planning, organizing, and mobilizing activities is central for stimulating and keeping the local leadership activism alive. In this way, besides training,

policymakers and community development practitioners should establish regular communication with the local leaders for monitoring, encouraging, and supporting their work of implementing activities, especially when it implies challenging cultural aspects, rooted habits, and power structures in their communities. They should also visit the communities periodically and organize regional meetings with those leaders.

Policymakers and practitioners should also stimulate regular interaction of local leaders, by, for instance, instructing them to create a regular schedule of meetings for planning and evaluating the activities. Also, the results showed that the ongoing development of activities for the community is vital for boosting and maintaining the enthusiasm of both leaders and other residents and for motivating more citizens to participate. Therefore, program makers should encourage and support local leaders' development of a regular calendar of activities. Activities, in turn, should be aligned with the local culture and appealing to the population. The local leaders should combine different approaches, to minimize the use of resources and enhance the continuity and ownership of the activities by other individuals and institutions. For instance, beyond the big events that are enjoyed by the community, they should also put efforts into partnering with and sensitizing schools and community organizations to integrate social participation activities in their regular agenda. The local leaders should also develop forums for the interaction of a diversity of residents and key social players to deliberate about local issues and possible solutions, set strategies and accountability, and evaluate their actions. In this way, these forums could also represent an opportunity for residents to discover and discuss common concerns and solutions and support the creation of a strong purpose for collective action, motivating engagement.

Furthermore, policymakers should identify a permanent regional leader to support

developing local leadership for the local implementation of programs that foster engagement, by providing ongoing follow-up with the communities and assistance for their organization and the development and evaluation of practices. Such a leader could be, for instance, an influential regional resident, trained by the policymaker to exercise the development work, or a partner NGO.

The regional leader should also support developing and maintaining connections between the different communities. The findings showed that the enhancement of networks and social resources developed motivations and capabilities for collective action and collaboration. Policymakers should anticipate the provision of funding for the maintenance of a regional network, through annual meetings, and the development of biannual regional forums, with the participation of representatives of different community institutions and citizens.

Finally, in terms of external support, this study demonstrated that BMEC and other policymakers could strongly benefit from partnering with national NGOs, such as Gaia Social, for getting support for the local implementation of initiatives, community leadership development, and community capacity building. Also, regardless of policies, extension specialists or NGOs (which are more common in the community and regional development work in Brazil) should promote efforts towards building local capacity and developing individual and community agency in regions such as the EHR. The several recommendations I have discussed can also inform those practices. This study also brought to attention that community development practitioners must be careful to avoid creating local dependency on their support instead of fostering agency and empowerment.

They should strengthen and support developing local assets and structures for building capacity. For instance, they could offer programs for developing local leadership, focused on

enhancing organizing and mobilizing skills, project development (including local assessments, planning, evaluation, and fundraising), conflict resolution, and democratic practices for problem-solving and improving the social good. They could also create participatory programs of community education that promote sustained connections between residents (and neighboring towns) and the development of small projects for enhancing the different social fields, thus, fostering individual and collective agency and the development *of* and *in* the communities. They could also support the community in creating a shared vision of the future based on their needs and draw an action plan to achieve it. Also, they could assist the community in creating spaces for social participation, such as the local forums I mentioned, to deliberate local issues, reunite experts, and citizens to discuss solutions. They should also encourage and facilitate the creation of working groups and permanent spaces for participation and democratic practices. Finally, they could offer training, technical assistance, and support for the institutional development and strengthening of local community organizations.

2.3. Recommendations for future research

Concerning future research, for extending the exploration of this study, researchers could investigate the motives of the non-engagement of several individuals that participated in the SMEP workshops or that were appointed for the local committees. That could illuminate additional factors affecting leadership engagement or provide a more profound understanding of aspects regarding community capacity in that region.

An additional study could compare factors influencing the engagement of the social mobilizers that were active in different years and the approaches they used in their work. That could also give more insights regarding how the changes in the local context and types of mobilization practice influence the engagement of leaders and other residents.

Another exciting research project would be of studying the frames that the various players (social mobilizers, leaders of SMEP Committees, government officials, school principals, teachers, parents, among others) carry regarding SMEP, the issues of local education and possible solutions, and their role in those. That will provide a better understanding about their choices about engaging and collaborating.

I also suggest the replication of this study in other Brazilian regions where SMEP was implemented, especially in those with higher agency and a different power structure. Researchers could also compare the outcomes of places where an external agent was facilitating the implementation process, such as Gaia Social in the EHR, and areas where there was not. Also, because of the importance of Gaia Social for developing community leadership and capacity in the EHR, it would be significant to investigate the effectiveness of their work in the region. That should inform the improvement of practices and insights for new approaches that would enhance the agency of individuals and communities.

Moreover, to have a complete assessment of the success of SMEP, new studies should focus on the second level of engagement in the communities (of the EHR and others) that are resultant of the social mobilizers' work. They could evaluate the impact of the implementation of SMEP on community participation in local education and the relationship school-community. Studies could also compare the outcomes of SMEP across places where it had different lifetimes. The success of the program could also be measured regarding the betterment of local education, by investigating whether its activities contributed to educational indices, students' performance, or other indicators the researcher or the communities find appropriate. Finally, researchers could also investigate the different forms that SMEP activities and precepts were incorporated locally in the routines of organizations and individuals, and into other programs and practices.

Furthermore, future research could explore in more depth issues of power. An interesting study would be of analyzing the power dimensions in the formation of SMEP as a policy and aspects that affected its approach and lifetime inside the BMEC. Researchers could also draw a parallel investigation to examine power issues and politics that affected the implementation of SMEP at the local level (such as in the EHR). Moreover, it would be interesting to study how the power structure of the communities' influence engagement in other institutionalized spaces of social participation, such as the different municipal councils. That could sum up the findings of this study and collaborate further in informing reforms or new policies for social participation in Brazil and practices of community development and capacity building.

3. Considerations about the effectiveness or success of SMEP

The findings of this study showed that SMEP brought several benefits to the social mobilizers and the communities of the EHR, including developing leadership and community and fostering and increasing social participation. However, the local capacity built through SMEP's events, training, and activities were compromised with the withdrawal of Gaia Social and the lack of interaction and follow-up by BMEC, after the second year of implementation, as well as by challenges related to local politics and power disputes. Moreover, the local capacity was built mostly in relation to the first level of engagement: the activism of social mobilizers. As a consequence, the declining activism of social mobilizers, which both resulted in and was a result of the weakening or the end of local SMEP activities, also hindered the maintenance and expansion of benefits of the program to the community. Even in places where the activities were still being conducted in 2017, the participants felt the need for additional and more frequent activities for better results. In this way, SMEP was a success among the participants, especially the social mobilizers and schools. However, the implementation of its activities in the EHR

communities was often difficult to sustain, due to a set of factors already discussed in this study, which hampered the development of better and retained results and more benefits in some cases. The results showed that the implementation of SMEP contributed to the development *of and in* communities. It created opportunities for social interaction, creation of new ties across social fields and towns, and collective work, which developed the community field. There are testimonies of people changing attitudes and behaviors towards caring more about the collective, engaging more in local issues, and collaborating more with others. There were also positive outcomes in the local education, including higher parental involvement, organization of teachers, and performance of students, which reflects the development in the community. Residents also applied SMEP precepts and strategies in other social fields. In this way, SMEP confirmed the prediction of Wilkinson (1991) and Summers (1986) that a process focused on the development of a specific social field in a community can also support the development of the community field, which, in turn, can lead towards the engagement for the development of other fields.

However, the official lifetime of SMEP was short in most of the towns, and the findings of this study suggest that the developed actions were not enough to generate sustained capacity, leadership activism, and collective engagement over time. Some benefits were retained, while others were temporary (created through the collective action and development of activities). The social mobilizers acknowledged that changing cultural habits, attitudes, and behaviors towards a greater local engagement take time and perceived that SMEP activities should be carried out longer and more consistently to be more effective. They also felt a need for additional actions and funding to mobilize more residents, to involve more leaders, and to extend the work to more remote rural villages.

The implementation of SMEP in the EHR became too dependent on education experts

(working on public jobs) and the support of the local government, being vulnerable to the willingness and decision-making of local power officials and local politics and power disputes. For a program aiming at fostering citizen's engagement, the big contradiction and failure was of reinforcing the top-down approach and the power structure of the communities, instead of anchoring its leadership and ownership in the civil society, which would empower residents and foster more democratic practices. It also reinforced the cultural perception of the public as a matter of the government, instead of the co-responsibility of the society. Also, the lack of federal funding for SMEP activities reinforced its dependence on the municipal government, which, in turn, often coped with a shortage of resources and corruption. The very BMEC's representative acknowledged these flaws in his interview.

The findings also indicated that BMEC failed to pay attention to the uniqueness of each community for the local implementation of SMEP. It ignored the importance of the local cultural contexts (including common habits, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors), power relations and structures, and community capacity (including agency and needs for developing organizing and leadership skills). The lack of communication between BMEC and the communities was such that, in 2017, the social mobilizers did not even know about the national termination of SMEP by the new Brazilian president. I believe the strategies created by BMEC and its scarce interaction with the social mobilizers and the communities were deficient in handling the local challenges for more participatory and democratic practices. In contrast, Gaia Social assumed this role. Its presence and persistent work were key in offering support and in building local capacity, by navigating the local contexts, which enabled the initial implementation of SMEP in the EHR.

Gaia Social was a cornerstone to the social mobilizers in the implementation of SMEP. However, that relationship may have developed a local dependency on the NGO or not enough

capacity to break cultural aspects and power structures that would lead to more significant changes towards sustained participation and democratic practices in the towns. Although Gaia Social and BMEC enthused the social mobilizers, they did not focus on developing specific skills of planning and organizing during the training efforts. As a result, despite their importance, the local SMEP Committees were not fully structured and developed, weakening the articulation of social mobilizers. Also, local organizations which could have helped in keeping the development of local leadership and ownership for SMEP, such as the churches, were not involved in SMEP substantially. Moreover, SMEP workshops and events did not foster or provide tools for deeper “problematization” (Freire, 1970) of their realities, nor participatory techniques for problem-solving, focusing more on mobilization and parental involvement. Finally, the regional network created by Gaia Social fostered greater diversity and participation of residents in SMEP actions, but the communities were not able to sustain such connections by themselves.

After all, SMEP was highly popular and appreciated by social mobilizers and residents. It brought important benefits to the social mobilizers in terms of leadership and professional development, the experience of collective action, and enjoyment for engagement. Several participants declared that their involvement with SMEP resulted in better respect and recognition of their work by the communities, new knowledge and developed skills, improvement of their resumes, and new inputs for their jobs. It also enabled new experiences of community leadership and organizing and participatory practices, which fostered agency and gathered and empowered individuals and the communities. In this sense, SMEP also seems to have brought a certain feeling of hope to the participants. Experiencing organizing, getting people together, and seeing the community collaborating and engaging for a common purpose and the benefit of all was very

inspiring to the social mobilizers. Such an experience of developed agency, of feeling that they could contribute to change things for better, and of seeing positive results from their efforts was very empowering for them, as also predicted by Freire's (1970) theory. Especially in communities with low agency and experience of social participation and organizing, seeing the movement led by themselves brought them hope for social betterment, starting with public education, which was the motivating passion of most social mobilizers.

In general, SMEP activities thrived where more diverse people got engaged in shared leadership, having the support of the local government or schools. They were also more present when incorporated into the local school calendars and other programs in those places. SMEP precepts and strategies also gained force when incorporated in the routines of professionals, schools, and citizens, regardless of its official status in the municipality. Although the actions were less apparent, they were empowering because they took the shape of organic public work, done by local experts, citizens, and students, independent of the local power structures. Those actions were also empowering for individuals because they stayed out of the loop of the hierarchies and decision making of local power holders, even if they did not notice that that was a form of power gain. Despite those cases, my impression is that, in general, the perception of the participants regarding power inside their communities remained the same, and, although they complain, they keep following the rules of the positional power structure of their communities.

Finally, it is also important to discuss the politics of SMEP versus the SMEP politics, meaning perceiving SMEP as a policy developed to support the government's agenda or as a policy created to empower citizens. After deeply analyzing the policy, the different perspectives of the interviewees, and the findings of this study, in my perception, SMEP was created with both intentions, but mainly of inciting the communities to social participation, thus challenging

the culture of non-engagement. In contrast to Antonini's (2014) critiques, I do not believe that BMEC created SMEP only as an instrument to get the societal legitimation of its plan of government (the PDE). Although the plan and suggestions of SMEP were aligned to the PDE, they were suitable to other policies at the national and local levels, such as the PNE, the PME, the schools' PPP, and programs from other social fields. Moreover, the sheer popularity and appreciation of SMEP among the social mobilizers in the EHR showed that its purpose and precepts were aligned to local, felt needs of a higher parental involvement and community participation in education, planning, and other areas. The participants also acknowledged SMEP as an important instrument for community engagement and parental involvement. Moreover, in an interview for this study, the founder of SMEP confirmed that she got inspired by common needs she perceived when working with several communities around Brazil. At the request of the Minister of Education, her experience drove her to find practices and professionals that were developing engagement work, such as Werneck, for creating the policy. Moreover, SMEP follows the trend of policies and public spaces created by the federal government to invite and to allow more participation of the society in public issues after the end of the military dictatorship, which was accentuated during the terms of the Worker's Party - when SMEP was designed.

I found through the interviews with the BMEC's representatives that SMEP was vulnerable not only to variations in the government at the local level but also at the federal level. As a public policy created by a group of people who assumed the BMEC for a certain period, the program also suffered from self-interest politics and the turnover in positions inside the Ministry, which affected its strength. With the egress of the founder of SMEP from the BMEC, the program started losing its prestige inside the government, receiving less attention from officials and suffering from politics and power disputes for its coordination and cuts in funding. Changes

in the SMEP's coordination and team, and other public policies, also altered its approach over time. The culmination of the decline of SMEP was in 2016 when a new president took office and terminated the program, mainly because it was linked to policies created by the former government – something that was also seen in the EHR communities.

4. Researcher stance revisited

This study has driven me into an adventure of personal and professional growth, resilience, and self-discovery. The experience of critically analyzing SMEP, the return to the communities with a different look, the challenges of the complexity of this study, and the insights into the Brazilian scenario of social participation, mainly inspired this process.

I left the EHR communities when SMEP implementation was at its peak, and I started to outline this study about a year after that. The almost three years of work in those communities in the field of education, and more specifically in encouraging and supporting the implementation of SMEP, influenced my perceptions of the policy and the ways I framed it initially. I notice that as a community development practitioner, I did not develop my analytical focus on SMEP. I was moved by the potential contribution of the program to the communities as I witnessed the enthusiasm of the residents taking the lead and working with others to improve local education. Although I could recognize several challenges in the local implementation of SMEP at that time, seeing people excited to get to know others, putting forth efforts to bring the whole community together, supporting neighboring towns, and putting political differences aside for the common good in some cases, distracted me from being more critical.

However, being analytical was my purpose as a researcher. In preparation for this research, I started by investigating SMEP at other levels, such as the forces driving policy formation and the ambiguities of the conceptual and methodological approach that inspired the

program. I also ran a pilot study where I used the critiques existent in the literature (mentioned in Chapter II) and Gaventa's (1988, 1996) conceptual framework to analyze the use of power at these two levels and at the local implementation of SMEP (based on my previous experiences). In this journey of critically analyzing SMEP, I realized I left the EHR with a romanticized view of the program. That realization was very meaningful to me because I also realized that such a journey had guided me through a process of *conscientization*, as advocated by Freire (1976). Through that process, I became aware of other facets of the larger reality that I did not know or could not see before. I met the "other" side of several aspects related to SMEP, which were permeated by flaws, politics, and power relations, as summarized in Chapter II. As predicted by Freire, this intrigued me further to develop this study for investigating the local realities and being able to provide informed recommendations for policy and practices.

The analytical process, which was more conceptual, made me grow as a critical thinker. However, my return to the communities (for a scoping visit and data collection) and my interaction with the participants of this study were crucial to make me a better researcher. After the critical analysis, I ended up biased by only looking at SMEP through negative lenses. I struggled inside this dichotomy: the policy was either entirely bad or entirely good. The interaction with the participants made me see and recall positive aspects, in practice, and made me perceive and embrace SMEP as an initiative that presents dualities. With that, I could be neutral regarding SMEP as a researcher, neither advocating for it nor refuting it.

That also taught me a lesson regarding research in public policy. Although theoretical and conceptual analyses are of great value for informing policy and reforms, the assessment and study of its implementation in practice are essential for having a comprehensive and less biased understanding of reality. Theory and critiques distanced from practice can lead to

misinterpretations, the same way that practices that are not assessed may take ineffective paths and waste public resources and opportunities for transformation. I would recommend the researcher, if feasible, to examine through different perspectives, to analyze the different levels – from formation to implementation, to hear a diversity of voices.

I feel particularly privileged in this study for having the opportunity to hear the perceptions of those leaders that were primarily involved in the implementation of SMEP in their communities and the professionals from BMEC and Gaia Social, who I witnessed being committed and passionate about their work. Also, the icing on the cake was interviewing the person who created the policy at the request of the Minister. Although I was aware that other political and economic forces might have influenced the creation of SMEP, and that its conceptual and methodological framework had contradictions, talking to the creator clarified the good intention of professionals working on its elaboration and implementation, informed by their grass-roots experiences and perceptions of local needs.

This study also challenged me to continually develop my qualitative research skills. MaxQDA was a great tool for analysis of the extensive amount of data and a large number of variables. I also found the development of the case study protocol essential to plan and guide my steps. Grounding my methodology on approaches of acknowledged scholars also made me trust I was on the right path. Moreover, my commitment to validity and reliability, mainly because of my previous involvement with the cases and the qualitative nature of this study, led me to keep practicing reflexivity. That enhanced my awareness about my attitudes, thoughts, reactions, and patterns, which I ended up also applying to my writing, communication, and other aspects of my personal life. It also gradually increased my confidence as a researcher, which I applied in coping with uncertainties in the fieldwork, and in choices regarding analysis and presentation of

the findings, for instance.

Throughout this study, I witnessed several, big changes in the Brazilian government and in the way Brazilians responded to that. It has been a period of a radical change from a more popular, left-wing approach to politics towards a conservative, elitist one. I saw the loss of important public policies and social rights that were conquered through years of struggle. The very termination of SMEP was a reflection of that. Unfortunately, in the current Brazilian administration, I do not see space anymore for public policies that encourage social participation, such as SMEP. The campaign of the current elected president, Jair Bolsonaro, also reinforced the idea of the government as the great provider, by selling his image as "The Myth," the hero that came to solve all the problems created by former administrations and to save the population. Although there is a huge critical mass against his political ideas both within and outside the country, most of the Brazilians ended up believing in his "salvation."

The political agitation and economic crisis in Brazil in the last seven years had the positive outcome of getting citizens out of their comfort zone and engaging them in political discussions. There was no more room for "not liking politics." In one way or another, Brazilians had to develop an opinion of the political situation, parties, and politicians, and take a stand. But if, on the one hand, it prompted people to give their opinions and look for information, they also became the target of manipulation by the media, political parties, and fake news. Likewise, the political situation ended up generating a division between people on the basis of political parties, making collaboration and tolerance even more difficult.

My study also made me aware of how much the Brazilian culture is rooted in the idea of citizens being customers of the government, and how much democracy has been reduced to having the power to elect the governors and legislators. This is even more evident when I

compare with my experience in the U.S.A., where involvement in the public affairs of the community and community service and volunteerism are encouraged culturally. I also realized through this research how much the concept of “public” equals “property of the government” in Brazil, which is even ingrained in the frames of advocates of social engagement and empowerment, like me. Until this study, I hadn’t perceived how much that has been impacting engagement, community development, and politics in Brazil. It seems that the connotation of “*everyday politics*” that prevails in Brazil is of government patronage and power games of self-interest instead of the public work of ordinary citizens, defended by Boyte (2004).

However, I leave this study inspired to become a better practitioner and advocate for education, community development, and participatory democracy. Meeting the enthusiasm of the participants in experiencing engagement and engaging others for the betterment of their communities was very inspiring and brought hope that things can change. Most of them are also educators and can contribute to reaching others for active citizenship. Moreover, this study confirmed the importance of NGOs / non-profits in building community capacity, development, and leadership in Brazil. As a professional that usually affiliates with this type of organization, I feel compelled to share the results of my study also amongst this segment in Brazil to inspire better practices. In this way, I feel the need to raise discussion about how development organizations and practitioners can generate a positive impact in communities without creating dependency on their work or the government. New alternatives and access to funding also need to be created.

Finally, this research was very impactful to the participants. Having their community selected for the study already boosted their pride, as I felt by the way they welcomed me in all the cases. Moreover, I sense that, just by participating, they already felt empowered by being

acknowledged as leaders trying to evoke positive change in their communities. My return to the communities also seemed to, somewhat, inspire them to keep, resume, or believe in engagement. This also boosts my commitment to return the results to them. To conclude, it was very touching to see how the representative of BMEC received the information about some of my findings, especially regarding him being an inspiration to several social mobilizers. He received that as a scientific validation of the importance of his activism, which was an incentive for keeping fighting for better public education in this adverse political scenario in Brazil.

5. Concluding thoughts

This study has shown that SMEP, as an innovative form created by the Brazilian government for fostering social participation, was highly appreciated by those that engaged in its activities in their communities. If reformed, policies like that could have a good potential for fostering actions that reapproximate citizens to the public life. The implementation of SMEP in the EHR stirred the appreciation of local actors for engagement and collective action in their communities. Despite its failures, the process of the local implementation of SMEP and its mobilization activities, while existent, contributed to building individual and collective agency and community capacity. They helped to empower individuals and the communities in general by developing more local leadership and by giving opportunities for citizens to experience engagement for promoting the public benefit of their local society. Residents experienced their own engagement and the work of engaging their neighbors and its results. This reinforced their appreciation for their community and for living in it.

The local experience of SMEP fostered the development *of* the communities, creating more social resources within and among towns. The testimonies of the participants of this study confirmed theories of interaction, by also revealing that the new social connections and the

experience of participating with others motivates them to engage for the betterment of other issues in different social fields in their communities. That also reflects an important predisposition to change political attitudes and behaviors that disfavor the power of citizens as co-creators of the public for their own and collective benefit.

In terms of challenges to social participation, this study has shown that the local cultural, social, and political contexts matter and should be taken into consideration in the formulation of strategies seriously. Policymakers and community development practitioners need different strategies and local structures that could better support and sustain social engagement. These should also foster practices with increased democratic potential, which are more dissociated from local politics and that defy local power structures that are less pluralistic. These practices need to nurture more co-responsibility and commitment among social players and institutions - including the local government - and more pluralistic and prepared local leadership. They must also foster more inclusive and diverse participation, which should also be more equitable between experts and lay citizens, improving their potential for collaboration.

REFERENCES

- Abloh, F., & Ameyaw, S. (1997). A historical perspective on community development. *Community Development around the World: Practice, Theory, Research, Training*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Ltd, 288.
- Adams, R. (2008). *Empowerment, participation and social work*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Alvarez, C. (1997). Science. In: Sachs, W. (Ed.), *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Orient Blackswan.
- Andolina, M. W., Jenkins, K., Keeter, S., & Zukin, C. (2002). Searching for the meaning of youth civic engagement: Notes from the field. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(4), 189-195.
- Andrade, F. M. O. (1998). O Programa de Saúde da Família no ceará: uma análise de sua estrutura e funcionamento.
- Antonini, V. L. (2012). *Mobilização social pela educação e a legitimação das políticas educacionais no PDE* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from Repositorio Institucional UNESP.
- Apaliyah, G. T., Martin, K.E., Gasteyer, S. P., Keating, K. & Pigg, K. (2012). Community leadership development education: promoting civic engagement through human and social capital, *Community Development*, 43 (1), 31-48.
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of planners*, 35(4), 216-224.
- Avritzer, L. (2008). Instituições participativas e desenho institucional: algumas considerações sobre a variação da participação no Brasil democrático. *Opinião pública*, 14(1), 43-64.
- Babbie, E. R. (1998). The practice of social research (Vol. 112). Belmont, CA.
- Babbie, E. (2005). Truth, objectivity, and agreement. In O'Brien, J. (Ed.), *The production of reality: Essays and readings on social interaction*. Pine Forge Press. Pine Forge Press.
- Bachrach, P., & Baratz, M. S. (1970). *Power and poverty: Theory and practice*. Oxford University Press.
- Bandura, A. (2010). Self-efficacy. *The Corsini encyclopedia of psychology*, 1-3.
- Becker, H. S. (2008). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. University of Chicago Press.
- Berry, W. (2010). *What are people for?: Essays*. Counterpoint Press.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). Thematic analysis and code development: Transforming qualitative information. *London and New Delhi: Sage Publications*.
- Boyte, H. (2004). *Everyday Politics: Reconnecting Citizens and Public Life*. Philadelphia:

- University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Brazil, Equipe de Mobilização Social pela Educação. (2014). Nota Técnica – Justificativa do Plano de Mobilização Social pela Educação. Brasília.
- Brazil, Ministério da Educação. (2007) *Plan for the Development of Education: reasons, principles and programs*. Brasília, DF, Brazil. Retrieved from http://portal.mec.gov.br/arquivos/livro/livro_ingles.pdf
- Brazil, Ministério da Educação. (2007) *Plan for the Development of Education: reasons, principles, and programs*. Brasília, DF, Brazil. Retrieved from http://portal.mec.gov.br/arquivos/livro/livro_ingles.pdf
- Brazil, Ministério da Educação. (2008). *Plano de Mobilização Social pela Educação*. Retrieved from www.crianca.mppr.mp.br/arquivos/File/mec/pmse.pdf
- Brazil, Ministério da Educação. (2012). *Plano de Mobilização Social pela Educação - Relatório de Atividades 2008/2011*. Retrieved from http://mse.mec.gov.br/images/stories/pdf/relatorio2008_2011corrigido.pdf
- Brazil, Senado. (1988). Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil. Brasília: Senado.
- Brennan, M. A. (2008). Conceptualizing resiliency: an interactional perspective for community and youth development. *Child Care in Practice* (Special Issue: Building Resilience in Children, Families, and Communities), vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 55-64.
- Brennan, M. A., & Israel, G. D. (2008). The power of community. *Community Development*, 39(1), 82-98.
- Brennan, M. A., & Luloff, A. E. (2007). Exploring rural community agency differences in Ireland and Pennsylvania. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 23(1), 52-61.
- Brennan, M. A. (2013). Community Leadership Development: A Primer to Theory, Research and Application. In: Brennan, M.A. (Ed.) *Community Leadership Development: A Compendium of Theory, Research, and Application*. New York: Routledge
- Bridger, J. C., & Alter, T. R. (2006b). The engaged university, community development, and public scholarship. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 11(1), 163-178.
- Bridger, J. C., Brennan, M. A., & Luloff, A. E. (2011). The interactional approach to community. *Introduction to community development: Theory, practice, and service-learning*, 85-100.
- Brock, K., Cornwall, A., & Gaventa, J. (2001). Power, knowledge and political spaces in the framing of poverty policy.
- Camino, L., & Zeldin, S. (2002). From periphery to center: Pathways for youth civic engagement in the day-to-day life of communities. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(4), 213-220.

- Carneiro, C. B. L. (2002). Conselhos de políticas públicas: desafios para sua institucionalização. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 36(2), 277-292.
- Coelho, V. S. P. (2007). A democratização dos Conselhos de Saúde: o paradoxo de atrair não aliados. *Novos estudos CEBRAP*, (78), 77-92.
- Coelho, V. S. P., & Nobre, M. (2004). *Participação e deliberação: teoria democrática e experiências institucionais no Brasil contemporâneo*. Editora 34.
- Coelho, V. S., Pozzoni, B., & Cifuentes, M. (2005). Participation and public policies in Brazil In: Gastil J, editor,; Levine P, editor.(eds) *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook*.
- Cornwall, A., & Coelho, V. S. (Eds.). (2007). *Spaces for change?: the politics of citizen participation in new democratic arenas* (Vol. 4). Zed Books.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 3rd edition. Sage publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). Five qualitative approaches to inquiry. In *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 3rd edition. Sage Publications.
- Cruz, P. J. S. C., Vieira, S. C. R., Massa, N. M., Araújo, T. A. M. D., & Vasconcelos, A. C. C. P. D. (2012). Desafios para a participação popular em saúde: reflexões a partir da educação popular na construção de conselho local de saúde em comunidades de João Pessoa, PB. *Saúde e sociedade*, 21, 1087-1100.
- Da Silva, A. F. (2010). Plano de Desenvolvimento da Educação (PDE), avaliação da educação básica e desempenho docente. *Jornal de políticas educacionais*, 4(8).
- Dahl Robert, A. (1961). Who governs? Democracy and power in an American city.
- Dewey, 1927. *The Public and Its Problems*. New York: Swallow.
- Dewey, J. (1939). *Moral principles in education*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Dewey, J. (1998). *Experience and education*. Kappa Delta Pi.
- Diamond, L., Plattner, M. F., & Walker, C. (Eds.). (2016). *Authoritarianism goes global: The challenge to democracy*. JhU Press.
- Dolan, P. & Brennan, M. A. (2016). Chapter 1: Introduction. In: United Nations, World Youth Report on Youth Civic Engagement. New York, United Nations Publications
- Domhoff, G. W. (2007). C. Wright Mills, Floyd Hunter, and 50 years of power structure research. *Michigan Sociological Review*, 21, 1-54.
- Dryzek, J. S. (2005) Making sense of earth's politics: A discourse approach. *The politics of the earth: Environmental discourses*. Oxford University Press.
- Emerson, R. M.; Fretz, R. I. and Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.

- Emery, M., Fernandez, E., Guitierrez-Montes, I., Flora, C. (2013). Leadership as Community Capacity Building: A Study on the Impact of Leadership Development Training on Community. *Community Development*, 38 (4), 60-70.
- Fairhurst, G., & Sarr, R. (1996). *The art of framing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fedozzi, L. (2000). Orçamento participativo e esfera pública: elementos para um debate conceitual. *Por uma nova esfera pública: a experiência do orçamento participativo. Petrópolis: Vozes*, 37-82.
- Finlay, J., & Fink, G. (2011). Social Security reform and male labor force participation around the world. *Boston College Center for Retirement Research Working Paper*, (2011-12).
- Fiorina, M. P. (1999). A dark side of civic engagement. *Civic engagement in American democracy*, 395-425.
- Fisher, F. (2000). *Citizens, Experts, and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Fisher, A. T., & Sonn, C. C. (2007). Power in community psychology research and practice. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 17(4), 255-257.
- Flanagan, Constance, and Peter Levine. (2010). Civic engagement and the transition to adulthood. *Future of Children*, vol. 20, No. 1 (Spring 2010), pp. 159-179. Available from https://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/docs/20_01_08.pdf
- Flint, A., & O'Hara, M. (2013). Communities of practice and 'student voice': Engaging with student representatives at the faculty level. *Student Engagement and Experience Journal*, 2(1).
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative inquiry* 12, no. 2.
- Frank, F., & Smith, A. (1999). *The Community Development Handbook: A Tool to Build Community Capacity*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (2014). *Extensão ou comunicação?* 3rd Ed. Editora Paz e Terra.
- Gaia Social. (2011). Investimento Social Estreito Annual Report. Campinas, SP, Brazil.
- Gaia Social. (2012). Investimento Social Estreito Annual Report. Campinas, SP, Brazil.
- Gaia Social. (2013). Investimento Social Estreito Annual Report. Campinas, SP, Brazil.
- Galambos, C. M., & Hughes, S. L. (2000). Using political and community activism to develop leadership skills in women. *Race, Gender & Class*, 18-35.
- Gaventa, J. (1982). *Power and powerlessness: Quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian valley*. University of Illinois Press
- Gaventa, J. (2006). Finding the spaces for change: a

power analysis. *IDS bulletin*, 37(6), 23.

- Given, L. M. (2008) Ed. *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Sage Publications.
- Gohn, M. da G. (2008). Abordagens teóricas no estudo dos movimentos sociais na América Latina. *Caderno CRH*, 21(54).
- Goodman, R. M., Speers, M. A., McLeroy, K., Fawcett, S., Kegler, M., Parker, E., ... & Wallerstein, N. (1998). Identifying and defining the dimensions of community capacity to provide a basis for measurement. *Health education & behavior*, 25(3), 258-278.
- Goodrick, D. (2014). *Comparative case studies: Methodological briefs-Impact evaluation No. 9* (No. innpub754).
- Granovetter, M. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological theory*, 201-233. Jacobi, P. (1999). Poder local, políticas sociais e sustentabilidade. *Saúde e sociedade*, 8(1), 31-48.
- Guba, Egon G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research 2*, no. 163-194.
- Hustedde, R. J., and Woodward, A. (1996). *Designing a rural leadership program and curriculum*. University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service: Lexington, KY
- Hyman, S. E., & Malenka, R. C. (2001). Addiction and the brain: the neurobiology of compulsion and its persistence. *Nature reviews neuroscience*, 2(10), 695-703.
- IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. (2010). *Censo 2010*. Retrieved from: <http://www.censo2010.ibge.gov.br/>
- IBGE - Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. (2015). *Censo 2015*. Retrieved from: <http://www.censo2015.ibge.gov.br/>
- Jacobi, P. R. (2002). Políticas sociais locais e os desafios da participação cidadã. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, 7, 443-454.
- Johnstone, B. (2008). Introduction. *Discourse analysis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Kabeer, N. (1994). *Reversed realities: Gender hierarchies in development thought*. Verso.
- Kaufman, H.F. (1959). Toward an interactional conception of community. *Social Forces*. 38:8-17.
- Keeter, S., Zukin, C., Andolina, M., & Jenkins, K. (2002). The civic and political health of the nation: A generational portrait. *Center for information and research on civic learning and engagement (circle)*.
- Kettering Foundation (2015). *Definition of Democracy*.
- King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. Sage Publications.
- Korsching, P. F., & Davidson, C. (2013). Community generalizing structure dimensions. *Theory*,

- Kvale, S. (2008). *Doing interviews*. Sage.
- Leavy, P. (2014). Introduction. In Leavy, P. (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2-25). USA: Oxford University Press
- Lewicki, R.; Gray, B & Elliott, M. (2002). *Making sense of intractable environmental conflicts: Concepts and cases*. Island Press.
- Libaneo, J.C. (1994) Tendências pedagógicas na prática escolar. In: LUCKESI, C.C. São Paulo: Cortez.
- LaPoint, V., Manswell Butty, J., Danzy, C., & Small, C. (2010). Sociocultural factors. In: CS Caluss-Ehlers. *Encyclopedia of cross-cultural school psychology*, 2, 904-911.
- Lima, R. A. G., Rocha, S. M. M., Scochi, C. G. S., & Callery, P. (2001). Involvement and fragmentation: a study of parental care of hospitalized children in Brazil. *Pediatric Nursing*, 27(6), 559.
- Lofland, J., and Lofland, L. H. (2006). Getting in. In *Analyzing social settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Longhi, J. C., & Canton, G. A. M. (2011). Reflexões sobre cidadania e os entraves para a participação popular no SUS. *Physis: revista de saúde coletiva*, 21(1), 15-30.
- Luloff, A.E., & Swanson, L.E. (1995). Community agency and disaffection: Enhancing collective resources. In L.J. Beaulieu & D. Mulkey (Eds.), *Investing in people: The human capital needs of rural America* (pp.
- Lukes, S. (2004). *Power: A radical view*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Luttrell, C., Quiroz, S., Scrutton, C., & Bird, K. (2009). *Understanding and operationalising empowerment* (pp. 1-16). London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Lyon, L., & Driskell, R. (2011). *The community in urban society*. Waveland Press.
- Lyon, A., Bell, M., Croll, N. S., Jackson, R., & Gratton, C. (2010). Maculate conceptions: Power, process, and creativity in participatory research. *Rural sociology*, 75(4), 538-559.
- Matarrita-Cascante, D., Trejos, B., Qin, H., Joo, D., & Debner, S. (2016). Conceptualizing community resilience: Revisiting conceptual distinctions. *Community Development*, 48(1), 105-123.
- Mathews, D. (2009) Ships Passing in the Night? *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Volume 13, Number 3, p. 5, (2009)
- Mathews, D. (2013). What kind of democracy informs community development? In: Brennan, M.A.; Bridger, J.C.; Alter, T.R. (Eds.) *Theory, Practice, and Community Development*. New York: Routledge
- Maxwell, J. A. (2008) Designing a qualitative study. [*The Sage handbook of applied social research methods*](#).

- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. (Vol. 41). Sage publications.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Matarrita-Cascante, D., & Luloff, A. E. (2008). Profiling participative residents in western communities. *Rural sociology*, 73(1), 44-61.
- Milani, C. R. (2008). O princípio da participação social na gestão de políticas públicas locais: uma análise de experiências latino-americanas e europeias. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 42(3), 551-579.
- Miller, D. (2003). Deliberative democracy and social choice. *Debating deliberative democracy*, 182-199.
- Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). Thematic analysis. *Encyclopedia of case study research*, 2455.
- Ministry of Education. N.d. Acompanhem a Vida Escolar de Seus Filhos.
- Moran, P. (2005). Structural vs. relational embeddedness: Social capital and managerial performance. *Strategic management journal*, 26(12), 1129-1151.
- Morrissey, J. (2000). Indicators of citizen participation: lessons from learning teams in rural EZ/EC communities. *Community Development Journal*, 35(1), 59-74.
- Nettle, C. (2016). *Community gardening as social action*. Routledge.
- Northouse, P. G. (2009). *Introduction to leadership: Concepts and practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- O'Connell, B., & Gardner, J. W. (1999). *Civil society: The underpinnings of American democracy*. Medford, MA: University Press of New England.
- OECD. (2013). *PISA 2012 Results: What Students Know and Can Do – Student Performance in Mathematics, Reading and Science (Volume I)*. PISA, OECD Publishing.
- O'Toole, K. (2003). Youth participation in a rural community centre: the case of southwest Victoria. *Rural social work*, 8(2), 14-25.
- Oliveira, F. J. (1996). Participação popular em saúde: as dimensões da cultura. *Saúde debate*, (52), 67-73.
- Olson, B. L. (2019). Higher Education and Community Development: A Multi-Stakeholder View on the Correlates of Project Participation and Design Preferences.
- Olson, B. and Brennan, M. 2018. “From Community Engagement to Community Emergence: The Holistic Program Design Approach.” *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*. 5(1): 5-19.
- Paro, V. H. (2000). *Qualidade do ensino: a contribuição dos pais* (Vol. 1). São Paulo: Xamã.

- Peterson, J. J., Haringa, J., Malinski, M. J., Bishop, J., & Stein, H. (2015). Meeting Students Where They Are: Introducing Service-Learning with Digital Media to Increase Self-Efficacy for Future Community Engagement. *The International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 3 (1).
- Pigg, K. E. (1999). Community leadership and community theory: A practical synthesis. *Journal of the Community Development Society*, 30 (2), 196-212.
- Pigg, K., Gasteyer, S., Martin, K., Apaliyah, G., & Keating, K. (2015). *Community effects of leadership development education: Citizen empowerment for civic engagement*. West Virginia University Press.
- Polsby, N. (1963). Community power and democratic theory.
- Prokopy, J., & Castelloe, P. (1999). Participatory development: Approaches from the global south and the United States. *Community Development*, 30(2), 213-231.
- Proner, C., CittaDiNo, G., Tenenbaum, M., & Ramos Filho, W. (2016). *A resistência ao golpe de 2016*. Canal 6 Editora LTDA.
- Ragin, C. C., Nagel, J., & White, P. (2004) *Workshop on scientific foundations of qualitative research*. National Science Foundation, 149p.
- Rappaport, J. (1984). Studies of Empowerment: Introduction to The Issue, Prevention In Human Issue.
- Ribeiro, V. M., Ribeiro, V. M., & GusMão, J. B. D. (2005). Indicadores de qualidade para a mobilização da escola. *Cadernos de pesquisa*, 35(124), 227-251.
- Roach, C., Yu, H. C., & Lewis-Charp, H. (2001). Race, poverty and youth development. *Poverty & Race*, 10(4), 3-6.
- Rossmann, G. B., & Rallis, S. F. (2016). *An introduction to qualitative research: Learning in the field*. Sage Publications.
- Rowlands, J. (1997). *Questioning empowerment: Working with women in Honduras*. Oxfam.
- Saldaña, J. (2009). An introduction to codes and coding. The coding manual for qualitative researchers.
- Sanders, I.T. (1970). The concept of community development. In L.J. Cary (Ed.), *Community development as a process*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Santos, P. R. (2014). Participação familiar em escolas de ensino fundamental no contexto do Plano de Mobilização Social pela Educação. 2014. 118 f., il. Dissertação (Mestrado Profissional em Educação) - Universidade de Brasília, Brasília.
- Santos Filho, E. T. D., & Gomes, Z. M. D. S. (2007). Estratégias de controle da tuberculose no Brasil: articulação e participação da sociedade civil. *Revista de saúde pública*, 41, 111-116.
- Saviani, D. (2007). O Plano de Desenvolvimento da Educação: análise do projeto do MEC. *Educação e Sociedade*, 28(100), 1231-1255.

- Seale, C. (1999). Quality in qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry* 5, no. 4, 465-478
- Seale, C. (1999). Quality in qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 5(4), 465-478.
- Sen, A. (2001). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Parents' social networks and beliefs as predictors of parent involvement. *The elementary school journal*, 102(4), 301-316.
- Sousa Coelho, J. (2012). Construindo a participação social no SUS: um constante repensar em busca de equidade e transformação. *Saúde e Sociedade*, 21, 138-151.
- Staeheli, L. A., & Clarke, S. E. (2003). The new politics of citizenship: structuring participation by household, work, and identity. *Urban Geography*, 24(2), 103-126.
- Summers, G.F. (1986). *Rural community development*. Annual review of Sociology, 12: 347-371.
- Sundblad, D. R., & Sapp, S. G. (2011). The persistence of neighboring as a determinant of community attachment: A community field perspective. *Rural Sociology*, 76(4), 511-534.
- Taylor, M. (2011). *Public policy in the community*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Toro, J. B., & Werneck, N. M. D. (1996). *Mobilização Social: Um modo de construir a democracia e a participação* [Social Mobilization: A way to build the democracy and the participation]. Belo Horizonte, Unicef-Brasil.
- Theodori, G. L. (2004). Community attachment, satisfaction, and action. *Community Development*, 35(2), 73-86.
- Tracy, S. J. (2010) Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 16, no. 10.
- Trent, A., and Cho, J. (2014). *Interpretation strategies: Appropriate concepts*. The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Valla, V. V. (1998). Sobre participação popular: uma questão de perspectiva. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, 14, S07-S18.
- Van Teijlingen, Edwin, and Vanora, Hundley. "The importance of pilot studies." *Social research update* 35 (2001): 1-4.
- VeneKlasen, L., & Miller, V. (2002). Power and empowerment. *PLA notes*, 43, 39-41.
- Wilkinson, K.P. (1970). The community as a social field. *Social Forces*. 48(March):311-22.
- Wilkinson, K.P. (1991). *The community in rural America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Wilkinson, K.P. (1999). Rural Community Development. *The Community in Rural America*, 81-92. Middleton: Social Ecology Press, Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Wilson, J. (2000). Volunteering. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 215-240.

- Wilson, L. P., & Sanyal, N. (2013). The best of times, the worst of times: Antecedents for and effectiveness of community engagement in two small rural towns. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 6(2), 8.
- Winston, F. (2015). Reflections upon community engagement: Service-learning and its effect on political participation after college. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement (TEST)*, 19(1), 79-104.
- Wituk, S., Ealey, S., Clark, M. J., Heiny, P. & Meissen, G. (2005). Community Development through Community Leadership Programs: Insights from a Statewide Community Leadership Initiative. *Community Development*, 36 (2), 89-101.
- Yin, R. K. (2015). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage publications.

APPENDIX A - Recruitment Materials



Dear Social Mobilizer,

I would like to invite you, as well as all the social mobilizers involved in the implementation of the Social Mobilization Plan for Education (SMEP) in this community in recent years, to participate in an individual interview. This interview is part of an academic research on the challenges and motivational factors of social participation in the activities proposed by the SMEP. Your experiences and insights will be of immense contribution to my study.

When: TBD

Where: TBD

Details: As part of my doctoral studies at The Penn State University, I am seeking the help of residents that acted as social mobilizers of the Social Mobilization for Education to participate in individual interviews. I would like to hear your experiences, perceptions, and opinions about the implementation of the Plan in your community, between 2012 and 2016. I am most interested in understanding the challenges in implementing the Plan and which factors has motivated or hindered social participation in carrying out the activities proposed by this policy. The session will last approximately 1 hour (between 45 to 90 minutes).

RSVP: *(Date and location TBD).*

I look forward to learn from you by hearing your thoughts, experiences and opinions regarding the implementation of the Social Mobilization for Education Plan in your community, and to hear your ideas on existent challenges and changes needed to enhance social participation towards the improvement of local public education.

If you have any additional questions, please contact me, the researcher, Erika Anseloni.

Erika Pioltine Anseloni

Ph.D. Student in Agricultural

Extension Education

Pennsylvania State University

Phone: (+1) 814-777-5063 (U.S.) / (19) 32323594 (Brazil)

Email: epa5036@psu.edu

Please read on for more details on this study

What do we want to do:

The researcher would like to interview all social mobilizers of your community to discuss the Social Mobilization for Education Plan (SMEP), idealized by the Ministry of Education. Questions will be related to your experience, perception and opinion regarding the implementation of this Plan in your community (between 2012 and 2016). I want to understand which factors have motivated, facilitated, hindered, or desmotivated the active participation of social mobilizers in carrying out the leadership of the activities proposed by the SMEP. The findings of this study should inform political reforms and recommendations for future planning in education in Brazil (and other places). I believe that your experience and thoughts are valuable knowledge to inform efforts for positive change in planning and social participation.

What information will be collected?

During the individual interview session, the researcher will ask a series of questions to you related to your experience, opinions, and thoughts regarding the implementation of the Ministry of Education's Social Mobilization Education Plan between 2012 and 2016 in your community. All participant responses will be kept anonymous and your contact information will never be associated with your response. Each interview session will be recorded, however recordings will only be accessible to this researcher and her advisors at the University.

Do I have to sign anything?

Before your participation on the day and location of the individual interview session, you will be provided with an informed consent form outlining the details of this research study, and your role with it. Your participation in the interview implies your voluntary consent to participate in the research. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Penn State Institutional Review Board. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions regarding your participation.

APPENDIX B – Informed Consent

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Participation in the Brazilian Social Mobilization for Education Plan (SMEP) Interviews

Principal Investigator: *Erika Pioltine Anseloni*

Address: *12 Ferguson Building, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 16802 (US) / Rua Coelho Neto 331, ap 122, Campinas, SP (Brazil)*

Telephone Number: *(814) 777-5063 (US) / (19)32313594 (Brazil)*

We are asking you to be in a research study. This form gives you information about the research.

Whether or not you take part is up to you. You can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. Your decision will not be held against you.

Please ask questions about anything that is unclear to you and take your time to make your choice.

1. Why is this research study being done?

We are asking you to be in this research because you were involved as a leader in the implementation of the Social Mobilization for Education Program in the Estreito Hydroelectric Region (as a social mobilizer, Municipal Secretary of Education, Gaia Social member or representative of the Brazilian Ministry of Education), between 2012 and 2016.

This research is being done to discover what are the tensions that involve the Social Mobilization for Education Program (SMEP) and the factors that may have discouraged, hindered, motivated, or enabled the engagement of social mobilizers in leading and managing the activities and efforts encouraged by the SMEP in six communities of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region.

2. What will happen in this research study?

You will be asked to participate in an individual interview session for about 45 to 90 minutes. In the interview, you will have the opportunity to respond to questions related to your perceptions and experiences in participating in the implementation of the SMEP in the communities (or your specific community) of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region.

3. What are the risks and possible discomforts from being in this research study?

Your participation in this research is confidential. Personal identifiers will be removed from the data and replaced with code numbers. The electronic data will be password protected. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable

information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses.

There is a risk of loss of confidentiality if your information or your identity is obtained by someone other than the investigators, but precautions will be taken to prevent this from happening.

4. What are the possible benefits from being in this research study?

4a. What are the possible benefits to you?

Your participation in this interview will help to better understand tensions and issues that could compromise the practice of the SMEP as a policy that encourages social participation and should foster the inclusion of citizens. The findings of this study should inform political reforms and recommendations for future planning in education in Brazil (and other places). The perceptions and experiences of the informants of this research in implementing the SMEP are acknowledged as a valuable knowledge to inform efforts for positive change in planning and social participation. A great benefit of this study is of giving voice to the citizens that actually experienced the implementation of such policy, who usually were not heard in policy making. We expect that local communities feel empowered by having their experiences used towards policy improvement, better understanding of community dynamics and social participation, and social sciences knowledge building.

4b. What are the possible benefits to others?

The findings of this study should inform political reforms and recommendations for future planning in education in Brazil (and other places), which would benefit students, their families, schools, education professionals and administrators, and the Brazilian population in general.

5. What other options are available instead of being in this research study?

You may decide not to participate in this research.

6. How long will you take part in this research study?

If you agree to take part, the interview will last between 45 and 90 minutes.

7. How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you decide to take part in this research study?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and sharing of your personal research information to people who have a need to review this information.

Any identifying information will be kept in a locked file or password protected file in a locked office at The Pennsylvania State University.

In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

We will do our best to keep your participation in this research study confidential to the extent permitted by law. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

8. What are the costs of taking part in this research study?

In the unlikely event you become injured as a result of your participation in this study, it is the policy of this institution to provide neither financial compensation nor free medical treatment for research-related injury. By accepting to participate in this interview, you are not waiving any rights that you have against The Pennsylvania State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its investigators.

9. Who is paying for this research study?

The College of Agricultural Science at The Pennsylvania State University, in the United States of America, is providing the researcher funding for this study.

10. What are your rights if you take part in this research study?

Taking part in this research study is voluntary.

- You do not have to be in this research.
- If you choose to be in this research, you have the right to stop at any time.
- During the interview, you can skip any question that you don't want to answer.
- If you decide not to be in this research or if you decide to stop at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

11. If you have questions or concerns about this research study, whom should you call?

Please call the head of the research study (principal investigator), Erika Anseloni at (19) 32313594 (Brazil) or (+ 1 814) 777 5063 (U.S.) if you:

- Have questions, complaints or concerns about the research.
- Believe you may have been harmed by being in the research study.

You may also contact the Office for Research Protections* at The Pennsylvania State University (+1 814) 865-1775, ORProtections@psu.edu if you:

- Have questions regarding your rights as a person in a research study.
- Have concerns or general questions about the research.
- You may also use these contacts if you cannot reach the researcher or wish to talk to someone else about any concerns related to the research.

*Please notice that the conversation will be held in English, though.

INFORMED CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH

Your participation implies your voluntary consent to participate in the research. Please keep or print a copy of this form for your records. {For implied consent}

APPENDIX C – Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol I – SMEP

Social Mobilizers

Date: _____ Time: _____ Town: _____

Name: _____ Contact: _____

Occupation: _____ Field of Work: _____

Title when social mobilizer: _____

Period of activity as a social mobilizer (between 2012-2017): _____

Mobilization () urban () rural

SMEP Committee - Member? yes () no () title: _____

I would like to start this conversation by trying to understand your involvement in your community.

Leadership

- 1. Have you had experience in leading or mobilizing people in your community before engaging with social mobilization for education? How?**
- 2. Are you a member of any organization in your community? Have you participated in projects or actions to improve your community before, other than social mobilization for education? Which ones?**

SMEP – Individual’s involvement and conceptions

3. How did you get involved with SMEP implemented in your municipality in 2012?

- a. Did anyone name him or volunteer?*
- b. Did you attend SMEP workshops, meetings, and events for leadership training? Which are?*
- c. Have you participated in activities developed by NGOs in your region? Which are?*
- d. What benefits did participating in these activities and events bring to you?*

4. What for you is social mobilization for education?

SMEP – Repertoire, frequency of actions, and support

1. What kind of actions or activities have you led or participated as a social mobilizer for education?

Could you tell me more details about what happened, such as:

- a. What were the main objectives of those actions?*
- b. Which participants, groups, or community organizations were involved? How many? How?*
- c. When and where did those activities take place?*
- d. Why were those actions chosen?*
- e. Did you use any resources or material?*
- f. Were organizations and individuals outside the community involved? How?*
- g. Have you participated in activities with social mobilizers from other municipalities and regions?*
- h. How often have you performed those SMEP actions in your community?*
- i. How was it decided which actions should be developed?*
- j. What was discussed with parents and community during these actions? Did you discuss local issues?*
- k. Have you had any support from government, schools, influential individuals, local organizations or outside NGOs? Which?*
- l. Did you conduct any kind of assessment of those actions?*

2. When performing these activities, did you usually work alone or as a partner with other social mobilizers?

- a. If alone, why?*
- b. Was there good communication between social mobilizers?*
- v. Do they usually get along?*
- d. From who?*
- e. What kind of support (financial, etc.)?*

Motivation to participation

3. What motivates you to get involved with SMEP and to mobilize families and the community for education?

- a. How did you feel about leading / participating in such activities?*

4. What most marked you in this work?

Challenges to participation

9. What are the main challenges, difficulties, obstacles that you had to face when acting as a social mobilizer for education?

- a. What factors, problems, events have discouraged you or prevent continued participation?*
- b. Can you give me an example of something or an event that has discouraged or prevented you from developing a social mobilization activity?*
- c. Has anything changed at SMEP after the 2013 municipal elections?*

10. What did you dislike the most about your experience as a social mobilizer for education?

11. What changes would you suggest in SMEP to facilitate your participation?

Now I will ask very specifically about the implementation of SMEP in your municipality, as you evaluate it.

Evaluation of the local implementation of SMEP

12. Do you believe the implementation of SMEP was successful in your community?

- a. Why? Why not?*
- b. Was the development of SMEP activities frequent?*
- c. Did people participate in the activities? Were they excited?*
- d. What were the main results of SMEP activities?*
- e. Has the family-school-school community been strengthened?*
- f. Are parents and the community more engaged in education? As?*

13. Do you believe SMEP has brought benefits to your community? Which ones?

- a. Concerning education*
- b. Concerning social involvement*
- c. Concerning other aspects/issues*
- e. Can you give me some examples of benefits or changes that you noticed in your community that resulted from SMEP?*

Finally, I would like to know your opinion about improvements in SMEP and other public policies focusing on social participation.

Recommendations for SMEP

14. What changes would you suggest for increasing the success in implementing PMSE in your community?

15. What changes would you suggest for increasing the benefits of PMSE to your community?

7. Do you have any additional comments about PMSE or your community?

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Can I contact you again if I have any further questions?

For observation:

Gender: _____ Age: _____

Marital status: _____ Children: _____

Education: _____ Income: _____

Religion: _____

Interview Protocol II – SMEP

BMEC representative – SMEP team

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Name: _____ Contact: _____

Actual title: _____

Title when involved with SMEP: _____

Period of involvement with SMEP: _____

History of BMEC

1. Could you tell me what your responsibilities regarding SMEP were?

- a. *In what kind of activities you were involved?*
- b. *Did you participate in the decision making?*

2. During your engagement with SMEP, have there been changes in policy, plan or implementation strategies?

- a. *Which ones?*
- b. *Why were changes necessary?*
- c. *By whom were the changes proposed?*
- d. *Who was participating in the decision making?*

3. The document consolidating the SMEP was originally based on the 28 objectives of the Education Development Plan (PDE), right?

- a. *Did something in the Plan change when new educational policies such as the National Education Plan were approved?*
- b. *Have any adjustments been made? Which ones?*

4. Based on your opinion and experience, why do you think the new government has ended SMEP?

The implementation of SMEP in the EHR

5. How was your involvement with the implementation of SMEP in the communities of the Estreito Hydroelectric Region?

Could you give me more details about your active participation, such as:

- a. *How often do you visit as communities?*
- b. *What kind of activities did you do?*
- c. *With whom did you speak?*

d. What were the main strategies for preparing and supporting the social mobilizers used?

e. What were the main commitments made by local government and social mobilizers?

5. How was the demand for support from social mobilizers?

a. Do social mobilizers often work independently and proactively, or more dependent?

b. Do you develop your ideas or follow as instructions from MEC, NGOs or the Plan?

6. Did you see anything unique about implementing SMEP in this reaction? What?

Benefits from SMEP

1. In your opinion and experience, what were the main benefits of SMEP for the communities and social actors involved?

a. Could you give examples of SMEP contributions particularly to the EHR communities, which you have noticed?

2. What factors or strategies do you think motivated the active action of social mobilizers in the EHR communities?

a. Could you give examples of situations that could illustrate this?

Challenges to SMEP

3. What are the main challenges in implementing SMEP?

4. Why do you think the implementation of SMEP was more successful in some municipalities than others in the SMEP?

a. What factors do you attribute to the success of your local implementation?

b. What factors do you attribute to the failure of your local implementation?

5. What do you think were the main challenges in implementing SMEP in those communities?

a. What were the main challenges faced by social mobilizers?

b. Could you give some examples to illustrate?

Recommendations for SMEP

6. What changes would you suggest for increasing the success in implementing SMEP in those communities?

7. If so, what changes would you suggest for increasing the SMEP and its benefits to the community and society at large? Why?

8. Do you have any additional comments about SMEP or the EHR committees?

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Can I contact you again if I have any further questions?

Interview Protocol III – SMEP

Gaia Social representative

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Name: _____ Contact: _____

Actual title: _____

Title at Gaia Social when involved with SMEP: _____

Period of involvement with SMEP: _____

Period of involvement with the EHR communities: _____

The implementation of SMEP in the EHR

1. How was your involvement with the implementation of PMSE in the Estreito Hydroelectric Region (EHR) communities?

Could you give me more details about your active participation, such as:

- a. What kind of activities did you do? With what goals?*
- b. What were the main support strategies for social mobilizers used?*
- c. What were the main commitments made by local government and social mobilizers?*

2. How was the demand for support from social mobilizers?

- a. Do they usually work independently and proactively, or more dependent?*
- b. Did they develop their own ideas or follow the instructions of MEC, NGOs or the Plan?*

3. How important do you think GAIA Social's participation was in implementing SMEP in the EHR communities? Why?

Benefits from SMEP

4. In your opinion and experience, what were the main benefits of SMEP for the communities and social actors involved?

a. Could you give examples of SMEP contributions particularly to the EHR communities, which you have noticed?

5. What factors or strategies do you think motivated the active action of social mobilizers in the EHR communities?

a. Could you give examples of situations that could illustrate this?

Challenges to SMEP

6. What are the main challenges in implementing SMEP?

7. Why do you think the implementation of SMEP was more successful in some municipalities than others in the SMEP?

a. What factors do you attribute to the success of your local implementation?

b. What factors do you attribute to the failure of your local implementation?

8. What do you think were the main challenges in implementing SMEP in those communities?

a. What were the main challenges faced by social mobilizers?

b. Could you give some examples to illustrate?

Recommendations for SMEP

9. What changes would you suggest for increasing the success in implementing SMEP in those communities?

10. If so, what changes would you suggest for increasing the SMEP and its benefits to the community and society at large? Why?

11. Do you have any additional comments about SMEP or the EHR committees?

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Can I contact you again if I have any further questions?

Interview Protocol IV – SMEP

Municipal Secretary of Education (MSE)

Date: _____ Time: _____ Town: _____

Name: _____ Contact: _____

For how long was a MSE? _____

Title when SMEP was initially implemented (2012-2013): _____

Direct involvement with SMEP implementation? yes () no ()

SMEP Committee - Member? yes () no ()

Supported SMEP Committee and SMEP activities in general? yes () no () partially ()

SMEP – General impressions

To begin with, I am curious about your general impression of public education in your city.

1. Are you satisfied with the quality of public education in your community? Because?

Now, let's talk about PMSE.

2. How would you describe PMSE?

3. Do you believe PMSE is a good strategy for improving good quality education in your community?

a. Because? Why not?

b. What is missing?

SMEP – individual's involvement

4. Were you involved in the implementation, management or activities of SMEP in your community between 2012 and 2017?

a. Could you explain your role? Main responsibilities, actions, activities, meetings and events you attended?

b. Have you been a member of the SMEP Committee?

c. Has a specific PMSE law been created in your municipality?

d. Did you get support from MEC, NGOS or other institutions?

5. How did you get involved with SMEP?

- a. Have you participated in activities developed by NGOs in your region? Which ones?*
- b. Did you attend SMEP workshops, meetings and training events? Which one?*
- c. Did you access the internet materials and tools (website and blog) provided by BMEC?*

6. What motivated you to get involved with SMEP? Or - What prevented you from getting involved with SMEP activities?

SMEP – Evaluation of local implementation and success of the program

7. Do you have an idea of how long the mobilization activities was / is active in your community?

9. Do you believe the implementation of SMEP was successful in your community?

- a. Why? Why not?*
- b. How do you rate community mobilization work that was done by social mobilizers?*
- c. Did people participate in the activities?*
- d. Has the family-school-school community been strengthened?*
- e. Are parents and the community more engaged in education? How?*

10. What were the main challenges and difficulties in implementing SMEP in your community?

11. What changes would you suggest for increasing success in implementing SMEP in your community?

12. Do you believe SMEP has brought benefits to your community? Which ones?

- a. Concerning education*
- b. Concerning social involvement*
- c. Concerning other aspects / issues*

13. Do you believe SMEP has brought benefits to itself? Which are?

14. What changes would you suggest to increase the benefits of SMEP for your community?

15. Do you have any additional comments about SMEP or your community?

Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Can I contact you again if I have any further questions?

**APPENDIX D – Findings of the Within-Case Analysis and Socio-
demographics of subjects**

Darcinópolis

Table 11. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively

Darcinópolis - factors affecting positively: 97 initial codes, aggregated into 42 sub-categories and 22 categories		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Socio-Demographics	Religion	Catholic - leadership development
	Position	School
		MDE
Field of Work	Education	
Empowerment	Sense of agency	Autonomy
	Sense of self as a valuable asset	The feeling of contributing to society
	Democratic participation / Civic engagement	Seeking for involving the community
Working together with the community for the common good		
Community capacity	Leadership	Leadership experience through involvement in activities of the Catholic church
		Previous experience as manager of several projects
		Always engaged in the community
	Community Agency	Collective collaboration among players
		Small town, solidary, everybody engages to help
		Public servants of social fields supporting each other's activities through social mobilization activities
	Participation in other activities or formative events of NGOs	CEDAC
		GAIA Social
	Positive and new social ties and networks	Exchange of experience with other municipalities
		Partnership with other social fields / MDs
		Motivated by positive companies / other social mobilizers
		Partnership at home
	Social interaction	Visiting other municipalities
		Meeting new people
		Being with everybody at the event
	Concern about the locality needs	Need for strengthening the family-school partnership
	Sense of collective/ community	Everybody thinking together about the collective betterment
		Being together with the whole community
	Community engagement and support	Engagement and participation of the whole community
Moments of excitement and happiness		
Parents enjoyed the event		
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Training and learning	Learning from workshops and activities
		Participation in the SMEP National Meeting
	Network and visibility through SMEP	Gaining credibility for the work done
		Collaboration between municipalities for implementing SMEP activities
	Institutional support	Financial support from the mayor
		Support from the MSE
		Support from the main municipal school
	Support from NGOs and external agents	Gaia Social in the leadership
		Existence of an outside leader, encouraging them
	Committee	Social mobilizers' teamwork
Repertoire of actions	SMEP developed through commemorative dates, meetings, and events targeting family at the urban school	
Commitment and positive sentiments	Valorization, love, and commitment to Education	Love and valorization of Education
	Enjoying community work	Enjoying working with people

Table 12. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively

Darcinópolis - factors affecting negatively: 61 initial codes, aggregated into 20 sub-categories and 11 categories			
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)	
Socio-Demographics	Position	Not in formal leadership	
		Job rotation	
	Field of work	Out of the education field	
Power Relations, Politics, and Conflicts	Municipal elections and political discontinuity	Change of public administrators (mayor and MSE)	
	Influence of local authorities and partisan politics	New mayor dismissing people from the committee	
		Influence of partisan politics	
	Conflicts and power disputes among players	Dispute of positions	
Disputes between MSEs			
Sense of lacking agency		Lacking autonomy	
		Respect to hierarchy	
Community capacity	Leadership (weakening of local leadership)	Loss of motivation because of the weakening of the SMEP local leadership	
	Community agency (low)	Passivity and lack of proactivity by the community	
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Support of Gaia Social (dependence on) and external agents	Absence of Gaia Social	
		Lacking external agent for following up and monitoring SMEP activities	
	Institutional and financial support	Lacking interest and support from the mayor	
		New MSE lacking initiative and enthusiasm	
		Lacking financial support	
	Committee - organization, structure, centralization		Committee members lacking organization and effectiveness
			Loss of enthusiasm because of new public management
Appointment of committee members by governors			

Table 13. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Darcinópolis

Variables	Status of social mobilizers (total of 6 individuals) <i>* the numbers represent quantity of individuals</i>	
Gender	5 individuals female / 1 male	
Age	4 between 30-40 years old 2 between 41-50 years old	
Marital status	6 married	
Education attainment	<i>All individuals have college degree; majors:</i> 4 Pedagogy 1 Social Work 1 Business → among them, 4 with graduate degree (all in the field of education)	
Religion	4 Catholic 2 Evangelical	
Employment status or Position	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 2 school principals, coordinators, and teachers 2 MSE 1 MDE technician or coordinator 1 administrator in public health	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 3 school principals, coordinators, and teachers 2 MDSW technician or coordinator 1 administrator in the police department
Field of work	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 5 Education 1 Public Health	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 3 Education 2 Social Work / 1 Public Safety

Babaçulândia

Table 14. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively

Babaçulândia - factors affecting positively: 58 initial codes, aggregated into 47 sub-categories and 24 categories		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Socio-Demographics	Position	School
		MDE
	Field of work	Education
Empowerment	Sense of self as a valuable asset/ contribution	Being acknowledged for being engaged
		Feeling as contributing to the community
	Sense of agency	Feeling responsible for making change
		Hope - Belief that things could get better
	Democratic participation and civic engagement	Commitment to teaching others
		Exercising citizenship
Mobilizing for shared responsibility		
Community capacity	Leadership	Emergent community leader
		Always engaged in the community
	Participation in other activities or formative events of NGOs	CEDAC
		GAIA Social
	Positive and new social ties and networks	New friendships in the other municipalities
		Exchanging experience with other people and towns
		Partnership with other social fields/ MDs
	Social interaction	Visiting other municipalities
		Meeting new people
	Concern about the community and local needs	Focus on strengthening the school-family partnership
		Previous assessments of local education
		Concerned about young community members
	Sense of collective	Being part of a group with a shared goal
		Being part of an engaged collective
Community engagement	Community members enjoying participating in the activities	
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Orientation - materials, tools, and information	SMEP's Booklet and other materials
		Plan of Action and BMEC's website
	Training and learning	Motivated by BMEC representative
		Acquiring new knowledge
	Network and visibility through SMEP	Competition with other municipalities
		Collaboration between municipalities for SMEP
	Institutional support	Support from the mayor
		Support from the MSE
		Collaborative work with schools
	SMEP Municipal Laws	SMEP Day created by municipal law
		Committee created by law
	Committee - organization, structure, centralization	Strong Committee leadership
		The committee as a respected and attractive group
	Support from NGOs and external agents	Gaia Social in the leadership and monitoring
		Existence of an outside leader motivating them
	Strategic Planning	Inclusion of SMEP in school's PPP and MPE
		Elaboration of an annual action plan
Results of an initial assessment of local education/parental involvement led to a commitment		
Ownership by the Committee	Ownership and autonomy	
Results / Evaluation	Positive results	
Commitment and positive sentiments	Love for education	Love and valorization of education
	Enjoying community work	Enjoying working with people

Table 15. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively

Babaçulândia - factors affecting negatively: 28 initial codes, aggregated into 24 sub-categories and 12 categories		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Socio-Demographics	Position (other jobs)	Lacking time because of other jobs
		Job rotation
Power Relations, Politics, and Conflicts	Municipal elections and political discontinuity	Change of governors and teams and discontinuity of activities
	Influence of local authorities and partisan politics	Partisan politics interfering on local governance
	Conflicts and power disputes among players	Avoidance of interfering in the new government's business
		New governors restricting the participation of former ones and their projects
		Conflicts between the interests of the teachers' union and public managers
	Mobilization is seen as a manifest by public leaders	Public managers seeing mobilization as a manifest (against them or their work)
Divergent frames among players	Different understandings between committee members and school principals regarding who should carry out the SMEP work and how (divergent frames)	
Community capacity	Community agency (low)	Lacking involvement of the community in education
	Lack of community engagement (in SMEP)	Low participation and the lack of interest of parents in SMEP activities
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Support of NGOs (dependence on)	End of activities of the NGOs
		Lacking an external agent for following up and monitoring SMEP activities
	Institutional and financial support	Deficiency in local financial support, human resources, and work conditions
		Lacking autonomy in educational resources management
		MSE lacking support
		Lacking support from the mayor
		Lacking conscientization of governors
		Teachers discontent with salaries
	Committee - organization, structure, centralization	Members lacking the commitment to keep working
		Dependence on the SMEP Committee by the schools
	Repertoire and frequency of action	Committee lost credibility due to loss of activity
		The belief that the committee's activities should target the families more directly, instead of the MDE /schools
		The belief that the school managers should have continued the work initiated by the Committee, creating other strategies and the PPP

Table 16. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Babaçulândia

Variables	Status of social mobilizers (total of 9 individuals) <i>* the numbers represent quantity of individuals</i>	
Gender	6 female / 3 male	
Age	4 between 30-40 years old 3 between 41-50 years old 2 > 50 years old	
Marital status	6 married / 2 single / 1 divorced	
Education attainment	<i>All individuals with college degree; majors:</i> 2 Pedagogy & Language / 2 Pedagogy & Social Work / 1 Pedagogy 1 Science & Chemistry / 1 Mathematics / 1 History & English / 1 Law & Language → among them, 5 with graduate degree (all in the field of education)	
Religion	3 Catholic 3 Catholic (non-practicing) 1 Evangelical 2 none	
Employment status or Position	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 2 school principals 2 MDE technician or coordinator 2 MS Education and school principal 1 MS of Education and teacher 1 mother and tutor counselor	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 2 school teachers 3 school principals 2 MDE technician or coordinator 1 MS of Education 1 social worker
Field of work	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 8 Education 1 Social Work	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 8 Education 1 Social Work

Tupiratsins

Table 17. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively

Tupiratsins - factors affecting positively: 118 initial codes, aggregated into 73 sub-categories and 27 categories		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Socio-Demographics	Religion	Quite religious community - communion
		High participation of churches in SMEP activities
		Leadership development through churches' activities
		Respect and collaboration between churches
		Being a representative of the church in the SMEP Committee
	Position and Field of Work	Being invited by the MS of Education because of position or area (school principal, council member, MDH)
Empowerment	Sense of agency	Feeling responsible for helping the community and its needs
		Autonomy in developing activities
	Sense of self as a valuable asset/ contribution	Having the opportunity to impart knowledge about specific themes to students and the general community (health, environment, critical thinking, social participation)
	Democratic participation / Civic engagement	Mobilizing the community to participate in the Education
		Feeling good when participating
		Working together with the community for the common good
		Opportunities for participation in decision-making
		Willingness to engage and see things changing
Community Capacity	Leadership	SMEP Committee's first leader
		Strong leadership of the committee
		Being leaders in activities of the churches
		Considering oneself as a leader in the community
	Community Agency	Municipal Departments embraced the SMEP Day
		The collective collaboration of all
		The readiness of the community in making things happen
		Engagement in community social activities
		Membership of several councils
	Participation in NGOs' activities	Participation in NGO's activities
	Positive social ties and network	Exchanging experience with other municipalities
		Partnership with other social fields / Municipal Departments
		Motivated by the effort and readiness of other mobilizers
		Encouraged by co-workers to engage
	Social Interaction	Events with other municipalities
		Enjoying the interaction with children
	Concern about the locality and local needs	Need for engaging parents to support the school
		Action/ activities based on different felt, local needs
	Sense of collective / community	All people engaged with the same purpose
		The collective is stronger than political differences
		Communion / reciprocity
		Feeling included in the community
	Community engagement and support	Enjoying seeing the students engaged and excited with SMEP activities
		Seeing the community enjoying the SMEP activities and participating
		Feeling good when participating
		Small town easy to mobilize
		Engagement and participation of the whole community (community action)

Tupiratins - factors affecting positively (continuation)		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Orientation - materials and tools	Leader studied the SMEP materials on BMEC's website to create the committee
	Network and visibility through SMEP	Collaboration between municipalities for implementing SMEP activities
		Show the work they do at the schools to the community
	Institutional Support	Support from the MSE
		Support from school managers
		Support from the mayor
		Other Municipal Departments and agencies
	Existence of SMEP municipal law	SMEP Day created by a municipal law
	Committee, organizational structure, and centralization	Existence of the committee
		Plural and inclusive membership of the committee
		Training of social mobilizers by the two initial leaders
		Efforts and active engagement of the initial leader
		Efforts and active engagement of the committee members
		Centralized in MDE but with a strong partnership with other MDs, schools, and participation of churches (shared leadership)
	Support from NGOs and external agents	Support of NGOs regarding doubts
		Motivation from Gaia Social
	Strategic planning and evaluation	Existence of annual planning and evaluation discussion
		Excitement about planning, improving strategies, & results
	Frequency and repertoire of actions	Activities developed were attractive to the community
		The community looks forward to the event in October
Themes were attractive to the community		
Ownership of SMEP	Themes for the activities are chosen based on local needs	
	The community took ownership of SMEP	
	Shared leadership between partners for SMEP Day	
Communication	Social mobilizers get along and communicate well	
Perceived results from the SMEP activities	People became more united and organized	
	More individual agency	
	Parents were touched and got more involved	
	Better results of local students when compared to others	
Commitment and positive sentiments	Love for Education	Love for Education
	Education as a local priority	Education as a priority to the individual and the town
	Enjoying community work	Enjoying working with people and the community

Table 18. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively

Tupiratins - factors affecting negatively: 22 initial codes, aggregated into 15 sub-categories and 9 categories		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Socio-Demographics	Position (other jobs)	Lacking time because of other jobs and bureaucracy
Power Relations, Politics, and Conflicts	Municipal elections and influence of authorities and partisan politics	Change of members in the committee by new public managers
		Collaboration affected by political differences
Community Capacity	Leadership	Lacking action by educational public managers and committee leader
		Change of leadership in the committee
		Stopped receiving invitation to participate
	Social Interaction	Loss of reference because of missing contact with other municipalities
	Lack of community engagement (in SMEP)	Lacking participation and self-indulgence of community
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Orientation and Training	Lacking training of educational professionals
		Failure in imparting knowledge about SMEP by the committee to teachers
	Financial Support	Lacking financial support
		Need for external funding
	Committee - organization, structure, centralization	Difficulty in the initial engagement of members
		Need for mobilizing the members of the committee again
Frequency and repertoire of activities		The slowdown in promoting the social mobilization in the community

Table 19. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Tupiratins

Variables	Status of social mobilizers (total of 12 individuals) <i>* the numbers represent quantity of individuals</i>	
Gender	11 female / 1 male	
Age	6 between 30-40 years old 3 between 41-50 years old 3 > 50 years old	
Marital status	10 married / 2 single	
Education attainment	<i>Elementary education:</i> 1 <i>High school (Vocational):</i> 2 (oral health and nursing) <i>College degree:</i> 9; <i>majors:</i> 7 Pedagogy / 1 Geography / 1 Nursing → among them, 5 with graduate degree (all in the field of education)	
Religion	9 Catholic 3 Evangelical	
Employment status or Position	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 3 MDE technician or coordinator 2 school teachers 2 school principals 1 school pedagogical coordinator 1 MS of Education 1 MS of Health 1 oral health technician 1 nurse and coordinator at MDH	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 3 school pedagogical coordinator 2 school principals 1 school teacher 1 MS of Health 1 oral health technician 1 nurse and coordinator at MDH 2 MDE technician or coordinator 1 MDSW technician and member of councils
Field of work	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 9 Education 3 Health	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 8 Education 3 Health 1 Social Work

Barra do Ouro

Table 20. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively

Barra do Ouro - factors affecting positively: 139 initial codes, aggregated into 102 sub-categories and 24 categories			
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)	
Socio-Demographics	Position and Field of work	Being invited by the MSE/Committee because of position and institution	
		Working at schools	
		Working at the MDE	
		Social worker and council member	
Empowerment	Sense of agency	Feeling accountable for making change	
		Belief that they can make positive change by engaging	
	Sense of self as a valuable asset/ contribution	Happy for contributing to the community	
		Seeking for doing the best work she could for the community	
		Being able to elucidate issues to the community	
	Democratic participation/ civic engagement	Democratic participation/ civic engagement	Believing that everybody should do their part to collaborate
			Commitment in mobilizing people for improving their community, not giving up
			Enjoying and committing to getting engaged
			Those involved giving their best to collaborate
			SMEP activities reinforcing their existing work of engaging parents in the school
			Seeking for a better education above political differences
			Learning how to work collaboratively
	Community capacity	Leadership	Strong, shared, and diverse leadership for SMEP initially
MSE supporting the leadership of SMEP actively			
Considering oneself as a leader in the community			
Always engaged in the community			
Being leaders in activities of the churches			
Community Agency		Community Agency	Collective collaboration and commitment
			Engagement and collaboration of public servants and officials from different social fields and agencies
			SMEP activities required/stimulated organizing & teamwork
			High participation and engagement of teachers
			Social mobilizers supporting outreach and social work activities developed by the churches
			Membership in municipal councils
Participation in other activities or formative events of the NGOs		Participation in other activities or formative events of the NGOs	Participation/learning through Gaia Social's events and activities
			Participation in the NGOs' leadership development activities
Positive and new social ties and networks		Positive and new social ties and networks	Exchanging experience, ideas, knowledge with other towns
			Bringing encouragement to their municipalities after participating in external activities
			Creating new ties and friendship through the mobilization
			The partnership between different social fields / MDs and public agencies, councils, retailers, municipal, state schools
			Creation of a network of public education workers to carry out the activities
			Motivated by the effort and readiness of other mobilizers
			Participation in meetings/events with other municipalities
Social Interaction		Social Interaction	Interacting and meeting new people
			Enjoying community events

Barra do Ouro - factors affecting positively (continuation)			
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)	
Community capacity (cont.)	Concern about the locality/ community and local needs	The difficulty of bringing the parents to participate and to keep up with school activities	
		Low participation of families in the school life / disconnected from school	
		The need for the parents' partnership for improving education	
		Need for awakening the community about the importance of education and of improving it	
		Students' bad behavior at school	
		Concern about the community's well-being	
	Sense of collective / community	Mobilization changing people and creating more awareness about others, concern for the community, and solidarity	
	Community engagement/support	Knowing that people would attend the activities when invited	Participation of parents and families in the activities
			Parents enjoying the action and seeing its positive effects
			Teachers highly engaged and enjoying
			Enjoying seeing the students engaging and excited, knowing the action is for their benefit
Structure and Strategy of the local implementation	Orientation: materials	Distribution and use of SMEP's Booklet to inspire campaign	
	Network and visibility through SMEP	People see that we are doing something to improve public education	
		Collaboration between municipalities for implementing SMEP activities	
Structure and Strategy of the local implementation	Training and learning	Motivation and inspiration by BMEC representative	
		Workshop and training for social mobilizers	
		Outside SMEP activities stimulating action within the town	
		SMEP events good for resumé	
		Participation in the SMEP National Meeting	
		Working the importance of the municipal councils in SMEP events and training	
		New learning acquired through the formative events and SMEP activities/ novelty	
		Learning about different cultures	
		Learning how to work together and with love for the team	
		Learning to care more about others and to help those needed	
	Institutional Support	Support from the mayor	Support and engagement of the former MSE
			Support from other Municipal Departments and agencies
			Support from the municipal and state schools and principals
			Valorization of education by the mayors and MSEs
	Committee	Plural and inclusive membership of the Committee initially	Centralized in the MDE and schools, but MSE kept inviting the partners from other areas and engaged school workers
	Support from NGOs and external agents	Gaia Social's support - motivating, encouraging, organizing	Existence of an external agent motivating and supporting
	Strategic planning	SMEP Week in the annual School Calendar	SMEP integrated to the PME, by being incorporated to another governmental program (PNAIC)
			Integration of SMEP with other governmental programs
			Creation of an action plan during the initial workshop

Barra do Ouro - factors affecting positively (continuation)		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Structure and Strategy of the local implementation (cont.)	Repertoire of activities	Activities that were attractive to the population: big events, marches, cultural activities, booklets, banners, and posters
		Cultural activities
		Participation in the activities of other municipalities to gain experience and bring ideas about community mobilization
		Motivating parents by showing them that other localities were also engaged (videos, pictures)
		Teachers engaging parents by class
		Integrated activities for the benefit of children
		SMEP thematic T-shirt
	Ownership of SMEP	SMEP proposal/themes highly match the local needs
		SMEP highly owned by the schools
	Perceived results and achievements of the social mobilization efforts	SMEP activities were great for the municipality
		Perceive SMEP as a solution to work with the families
		Participation of parents
		Seeing an increasing participation of parents
		Parents raising awareness about the importance of their involvement in the education of their children
		Parents becoming volunteers in the school
		Improvement in the behavior of students at school
		Satisfaction in seeing a betterment in the students' school performance as a result of the mobilization work
		People more engaged in helping others
		Municipal educational team becoming more united/organized
Development of school teachers' agency		
Commitment and positive sentiments about education and community		Love and commitment to education and their work
	Love for Education	
	Dream of seeing the Brazilian education better	
	Love their work (educator, council member)	
	Commitment to work	
	Enjoying community work	Enjoying working with people

Table 21. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively

Barra do Ouro - factors affecting negatively: 29 initial codes, aggregated into 25 sub-categories and 12 categories		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Socio-Demographics	Position	Job rotation, changing position and involvement
		New job, other responsibilities
	Field of work	Out of the education field
Power Relations, Politics, and Conflicts	Municipal elections, political discontinuity, and influence of authorities and partisan politics	Changes of members in municipal councils and job rotation led by the new mayor
		Slowdown of SMEP activities in the transition of local government
		Collective collaboration affected by political differences
	Conflicts and power disputes among players	Gossip
		Competition and position jealousy among players (social mobilizers, MSEs)
		Low teamwork among educational workers
Sense of lacking agency	Feeling like needing to be invited by the MDE to participate	
Democratic participation / civic engagement	The community expects the public managers to solve problems, lacking understanding the need for citizens' engagement and collaboration	

Barra do Ouro - factors affecting negatively (continuation)		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Community Capacity	Leadership	Community trusts outsiders better than insiders
	Community agency (low)	The community expects the public managers to solve problems, lacking understanding the need for collective collaboration for local development
		Low participation of parents in the school life and meetings/activities
		Low shared responsibility inside the school
		Low teamwork inside the public education team
	Community engagement and support	The difficulty of mobilizing the community to participate in the SMEP activities
Schools are more open but lost hope regarding the parents' engagement		
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Institutional and financial support	Shortage of financial resources for education and SMEP activities due to being a small town
		Lacking more support from school managers to school activities
		Not everybody likes to work voluntarily
		Teachers' discontent with salaries and career plan
	Support of NGOs and BMEC (dependence on)	The slowdown of activities after Gaia Social and BMEC left
	Frequency of actions	Lack of an external motivator and supporter
		Perceptions that activities needed to be more frequent and sequential

Table 22. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Barra do Ouro

Variables	Status of social mobilizers (total of 10 individuals) <i>* the numbers represent quantity of individuals</i>	
Gender	9 female / 1 male	
Age	7 between 30-40 years old 2 between 41-50 years old 1 > 50 years old	
Marital status	8 married / 2 single	
Education attainment	<i>High school:</i> 1 <i>College degree; majors:</i> 8 Pedagogy / 1 Social Work → among them, 4 with graduate degree (all in the field of education)	
Religion	4 Catholic 2 Christian Congregation 2 Adventist 1 Evangelical 1 Evangelical (non-practicing)	
Employment status or Position	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 3 school teachers 2 school principals 2 MDSW coordinator or technician and member of councils 1 school pedagogical coordinator 1 MDE coordinator 1 MS of Education	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 4 school teachers 1 school principals 1 school educational councilor 1 MS of Education 1 social worker 1 farmer 1 controller of the City Council
Field of work	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 8 Education 2 Social Work	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 7 Education 2 Social Work 1 Judiciary

Goiatins

Table 23. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively

Goiatins - factors affecting positively: 279 initial codes, aggregated into 148 sub-categories and 28 categories				
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)		
Socio-Demographics	Position	Coordinator or technician in the MDE		
		Representing rural school (school principal)		
		School teacher		
	Field of Work	Social Work		
		Education		
	Religion	Being part of a church		
Power relations and empowerment	Sense of agency	We had to start doing something for the betterment of the municipality		
		SMEP awoke the sense that I am responsible for the betterment of my community		
		Believing that they could foster the betterment of education through their engagement		
		Discovery that one could do many things		
		Wanting to make a difference		
		Understanding that oneself can contribute somehow to the betterment of education		
	Sense of self as a valuable asset/ contribution	Enjoying contributing to the community and helping people		
		SMEP made us feel helpful to our municipality and schools		
		Started to notice the difference that one person makes in the community		
		Being recognized for the work they developed by the community		
		Gaining the community's trust in the SMEP work		
	Democratic participation	The work of involving everybody and mobilizing society to participate		
		Informing and engaging people for the collective (shared) responsibility towards education		
		Informing and mobilizing people about their rights and participation in planning (public policies)		
		Doing the work for the community and a better education despite political differences and power disputes		
		Everybody doing their best to collaborate		
		People started doing something for the social good		
		Feeling good (active) about participating		
		Learning how to relate to people and to engage them		
		Exchanging ideas and debating with other people		
		New experiences		
		Already actively engaged in the community		
		Enjoying fostering positive transformation in the community		
		Community Capacity	Leadership	The contagious enthusiasm of the SMEP Committee leaders
				Strong Committee Leadership - competence, commitment, enthusiasm, and connecting
	Considered oneself as a leader in the community			
	Always leading the actions for the betterment of education			
The commitment of MDE's public servants and new MSE and a positive relationship between them				
Sense of community	Being part and happy in the community			

Goiatins - factors affecting positively (continuation)		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Community Capacity (cont.)	Community agency	Active involvement of social mobilizers in community outreach and social work activities developed by the churches
		Member of one or more municipal councils
		Participation in municipal councils and community associations
		Active participation in the Teachers' Union
		The collective collaboration of representatives from different churches, three MDs, municipal councils, municipal and state schools, local associations, and the Teachers' Union
		Teamwork
		Everybody striving, collaborating, and participating with enthusiasm
	Participation in other projects or formative events promoted by the NGOs	Involvement in Gaia Social's project of rural libraries
		Coordination or participation in the project for Nutrition and School Gardens offered by INMED
		Participation in the formative activities led by CEDAC and the Arrangement for the Development of Education
		Participation in the Project Development Course promoted by Gaia Social
		Motivation, experience, and benefits brought by working in the projects of the NGOs
	Social ties and networks	Exchanging ideas and experience with other municipalities
		Meeting new people
		The partnership between public agencies, MDs (different social fields), councils, and churches for strengthening the actions and the mobilization of the community
		Excitement and enthusiasm in the group of social mobilizers, believing in the work
		Influenced by the excitement of one of the SMEP Committee's leaders
		Other social mobilizers were pleasant to work together
	Social interaction	Interaction with other municipalities
		Socialization
		Participation in events from other municipalities
		Seeing other realities
	Concern about the community and local needs (shared goal)	The willingness to seeing a positive change in the local education
		Need for intersectoral action (the collaboration of different public areas) for strengthening and making public policies and services more effective
		The need for mobilizing the schools and the community for better results in education
		The need for the collaboration of all for improving education
		Need of parents and families being more engaged with school supporting the students' school life
		Parents need to understand that education is a priority, which initiates at home
		Rural areas need social, educational and mobilization work
		Population lacking information (especially vulnerable)
		Teachers needing to organize themselves for defending their interests

Goiatins - factors affecting positively (continuation)		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Community Capacity (cont.)	Community engagement and support	High participation of the community in the SMEP Day
		The community enjoyed the mobilization event (SMEP Day) and asked for more
		Seeing people that never participate engaging in the activities and saying that they were there for a better education
		People participating with joy and excitement
		Mobilizing inside the churches and their projects and participating in the SMEP events
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Orientation - materials, information, tools	Use of the booklet developed by BMEC
		Visits to the SMEP blog for ideas and information
	Training - workshop and events, and learning	SMEP National Meeting in Brasília
		SMEP workshop and ideas from BMEC's representative
		Meetings with BMEC's representative outside the town
		Knowledge gain
		Seeking for more knowledge to apply in the classroom
	Network and visibility through SMEP	Information about activities sent to BMEC for being published on the SMEP's blog
		Filled in a report of activities requested by BMEC
		The committee became famous in the town
		Feeling good about disseminating their work and receiving several compliments through the Facebook page
		Became more respected because of the work developed and acknowledged as somebody who likes the community
		Parents can see that the school policy is different, non-partisan
		Contributed to professional life - resume and work
	Institutional support	Support from the churches
		Support from other MDs (Social Work and Public Health) and the Guardianship Council
		Support from the Municipal Secretary of Administration
		Support from the MSE
		Financial support from the city hall and MDE
		Support from new MSE (for future)
	Committee, organizational structure, and centralization	SMEP Committee leadership composed for people in the MDE most engaged in education
		Competence and commitment of the MDE team that was leading the committee
		Motivating and robust leadership of the committee
		Leader of the committee elected by the group
		Excitement and enthusiasm of the committee members
		Plural and inclusive membership of the committee
		Centralized in MDE but with active participation and partnership of other MDs, churches, councils, schools, and other institutions
	Support from NGOs and external partners	Support, encouragement, and knowledge brought by CESTE / Gaia Social
		Collaboration, ideas, and motivation brought by Gaia Social
		Existence of an external agent motivating them and monitoring their results
	Strategic Planning	SMEP planning meetings
		Insertion of SME in the planning and activities of other programs and events, including from other social fields
Door to door visits to understand the social reality		

Goiatins - factors affecting positively (continuation)			
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)	
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Repertoire of actions	SME Day: Big movement, with a march, prize draw, fireworks, posters, and booklets	
		Lectures with influential leaders	
		SMEP thematic T-shirt	
		Creation of a Facebook page to disseminate SMEP activities and to mobilize families	
		SMEP activities integrated with actions developed by the churches	
		Rural libraries perceived as SMEP activity	
		Visits to schools and door-to-door in rural villages, integrating SMEP with social work action	
		Mobilization integrated to other activities at the schools (through cultural and thematic activities and commemorative dates)	
		Activities of convincing schools to open up for the participation of the parents	
		SMEP activities integrated with actions from the Public Health and Social Work departments	
		Inclusion of elderly, disabled and illiterate people	
		Mobilization strategies learned through SMEP became applied to other social fields(health and social work)/ schools	
		Ownership of SMEP	Themes for the activities are chosen based on the local needs
			Ownership of the mobilization strategies
	Engagement, commitment, agency of the SMEP leadership		
	Communication	Social mobilizers getting along and communicating well	
	Results and achievements	Seeing/showing the positive results generating motivation for mobilizing and engaging	
		The community started seeing education differently, giving more importance to it	
		There was a shift in teachers' and families' mindset/culture regarding parental participation	
		Integration teacher-family	
		Parents became more caring about their children's education	
		Parents demanding from schools for the first time	
		An increased presence of parents/families in the school	
		Parents becoming volunteers at schools	
		Most of the students started arriving at school with their homework done	
		Decreased rate of absences	
		Increased number of students in school and adult education	
		Teachers more caring and committed to the students' learning	
		Teachers gained more credibility of the community	
		Connected different sectors in the social movement and people started doing something for the common good	
		Seeing/showing the positive results generating motivation for mobilizing and engaging	
	Commitment and positive sentiments about education and community	Love and commitment to education and their work	Love for education
			Love for their work with education
Being proud of being part of the school			
Love getting involved in actions for improving education			
Committed to education			
Enjoying community work		Enjoying working with people and the community	
Love for SMEP	Love for SMEP	Falling in love with SMEP and being deeply involved	
		Feeling proud of being part of SMEP	

Table 24. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively

Goiatins - factors affecting negatively: 77 initial codes, aggregated into 50 sub-categories and 18 categories		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Socio-Demographics	Position	Lack of time because of other duties of their position Job rotation affecting involvement and development of SMEP Teachers feeling excluded from training and activities
	Field of Work	Committee members being switched to another area, weakening SMEP leadership
Power Relations, Politics, and Conflicts	Political discontinuity, the influence of authorities and partisan politics	A troubled political period in the municipality
		The constant change of public managers (mainly MSE), losing the support to SMEP - MSE changed focus
		New public managers did not want to support the work initiated previously by other government
		Partisan politics affecting institutional support and development of SMEP activities and projects
		MSE decides who participates in external training, usually benefiting MDE technicians over teachers
		New public managers leading job rotation
		Displacement of political opponents from their positions when they stand out
		Politicians believing that social mobilizers from other parties would harm them instead of contributing
		Politicians confuse social work with politics
	Collaboration affected by political differences	
Conflicts and power disputes among players	Divergences between mayor and MSE	
	Conflicts between MSE and the president of the Committee	
	People wanting to show off without having helped the action	
Sense of agency (a lack of)	Did not realize she could make a difference by herself	
Sense of self as a valuable asset	Lacking recognition of the work developed	
Community capacity	Leadership	Lacking a leader directing and fostering action
	Community agency	Low support from others and collective collaboration
		The difficulty of provoking behavior change in the families
	Social ties and networks (the loss of)	Difficulties in collaborating with other municipalities, drifting them apart
	Community engagement	Initial doubt that the strategies would work, and the community would participate
Social Interaction	Loss of interaction between committee members	
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Training and orientation	Teachers not being trained or oriented previously about SMEP
		Lacking knowledge that boosts the social mobilization
	Institutional support	Lacking support from public managers, who did not understand the importance of the SMEP
		Low interest and incentive from public managers to SMEP
		MDE's focus changed to other programs
		The difficulty of bringing other MDs to join efforts with MDE for SMEP because of the number of their internal programs
		The resistance of teachers in seeking out the parents
		Teachers lack support from MDE/MSE regarding participating and receiving training
Discouragement by the loss of support for the work with adult education		

Goiatins - factors affecting negatively (continuation)		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP (cont.)	Financial support	The high cost of the mobilization actions
		Lacking public resources specific to SMEP activities or an external sponsor
		Lacking financial resources for transportation for activities in the rural villages and other municipalities
		Lacking local public financial resources
		The financial crisis of the city hall, cutting expenditures
		Public education funding linked to city hall and depending on the approval of the mayor
		Not everybody likes to work voluntarily
	Support of the NGOs / Other partners	End of the incentive from CESTE
		Slowdown of activities after external agents left
		Lack of an outside leader, directing and organizing action
	Committee and frequency of actions	Lower activity of SMEP Committee resulting in activities slowing down and social mobilizers lacking motivation
		Lack of initiative to keep running and improving the projects
	Strategic Planning	Committee stopped meeting frequently and planning activities
	Communication	Loss of communication between committee leaders and members
		Lacking publicity weakening the movement
Lacking communication between sectors and MDs		

Table 25. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Goiatins

Variables	Status of social mobilizers (total of 16 individuals) <i>* the numbers represent quantity of individuals</i>	
Gender	12 female / 4 male	
Age	5 between 30-40 years old 7 between 41-50 years old 4 > 50 years old	
Marital status	10 married / 3 divorced / 2 single / 1 widow	
Education attainment	<i>High school:</i> 1 <i>College degree:</i> 15; <i>majors:</i> 9 Pedagogy / 3 Language / 1 Pedagogy & Language / 1 Pedagogy & Biology → among them, 13 with graduate degree (all in the field of education)	
Religion	8 Catholic 5 Evangelical / 1 Evangelical (non-practicing) / 1 Baptist / 1 none	
Employment status or Position	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 2 MDE technician or coordinator 6 school teachers and members of councils 1 school principal (rural) 3 school pedagogical coordinator 1 MS of Education 1 MDSW coordinator 1 MS of Administration 1 church minister	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 4 school teachers 3 MDE technician or program coordinator (including indigenous education) and member of councils 3 school pedagogical coordinator 1 school principals 1 MS of Education 1 librarian 1 taxes auditor 1 Executive Secretary of councils 1 church minister
Field of work	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 13 Education 1 Social Work 1 Public Management	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 13 Education 1 Social Work 1 Public Management

	1 Religion	1 Religion
--	------------	------------

Carolina

Table 26. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers positively

Carolina - factors affecting positively: 98 initial codes, aggregated into 60 sub-categories and 24 categories				
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)		
Socio-Demographics	Age	Experienced educators (between 40 and 50, more than 20 years of experience in Education)		
	Education Attainment	College and graduate school degree		
	Position	President of the Committee as an exclusive function Leadership position within the MDE		
	Field of Work	Education		
Empowerment	Sense of agency	Feeling accountable for making change The autonomy of the social mobilizer		
		Sense of self as a valuable asset/ contribution	Being helpful to others Sharing knowledge with others	
	Democratic participation and civic engagement		Already an engaged person Willing to contribute for a change Mobilization for education reinforcing one's work of engaging citizens Seeing people discovering their power and agency through the engagement Learning from others and sharing knowledge and experience	
		Community Capacity	Leadership	Considering oneself as a leader in the community
			Community agency	Membership of municipal councils Membership of a women's community organization
	Participation in NGOs' projects			Local coordinators of projects of the outside NGOs (INMED and AlfaSol)
	Social ties and networks		Exchanging experience and ideas with social mobilizers from other municipalities at the events Support/attendance of people from other municipalities in the local events New friendships	
Social Interaction			Interaction with people Participation in the activities of other municipalities	
			Concern about the community and local needs	Concern about local social issues Concern about parents lacking knowledge/ supporting schools Concern about indiscipline and bad behavior at school History of concerning about the collective and helping others The desire for a better life for others
Community engagement and support	Activities well-accepted by parents Good participation and excitement of people Getting thrilled when participating in SMEP activities Enjoying seeing the students engaged and performing in SMEP activities			

Carolina - factors affecting positively (continuation)			
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)	
Structure and strategy of local the implementation of SMEP	Orientation: materials and information	Guidance and materials provided by BMEC	
	Training	Participation in the SMEP National Meeting	
	Network and visibility through SMEP		Having a close relationship with BMEC representative (prestige)
			Collaboration between municipalities from different communities
			Enjoying being among people and making speeches at the SMEP events (inside and outside the town)
			Regional SMEP events held in Carolina
			Prestige brought by SMEP
			National registration on BMEC's system beyond the political discontinuity
			Participation in the SMEP National Meeting
			Exciting competition with other municipalities
			Institutional Support
	Support and close contact of BMEC representative		
	Support from MSE in 2012		
	MSE's trust		
	Presidency of the SMEP Committee as an exclusive work position inside the MDE		
	Municipal law	SMEP Day	
	Support from NGOs	Support from Gaia Social - transition between government	
	Repertoire of actions	Enjoying organizing events	
	Perceived results and achievements		Students behaving better
			More integration between parents, teachers, and principals
People discovering their agency			
People became more aware and engaged			
Increase in literacy and the interest in schooling			
People getting better organized			
Women gained agency and became more engaged in the community and local economy			
Commitment and positive sentiments	Love for Education and their work	Love for education	
		Love being an educator	
	Enjoying community work	Enjoying working with people and social issues	

Table 27. Within-case analysis' findings: factors affecting the engagement of social mobilizers negatively

Carolina - factors affecting negatively: 62 initial codes, aggregated into 27 sub-categories and 8 categories		
Themes	Categories	Sub-categories (second cycle of coding)
Socio-Demographics	Position	Having to focus on other tasks
		Change of function
Power Relations, Politics, and Conflicts	Influence of authorities and partisan politics	Partisan politics blocking projects
		Political jealousy
		Prevalence of politics over collaboration
	Conflicts and power disputes among players	The authoritarianism of the MSE
		Conflicts between MSE and the president of the Committee
		The self-interest of politicians and the MSE
		Conflictual relationship or avoidance of conflict between social mobilizers
		The chauvinist attitude of the president
		President wanting to show off
		Arrogance of the president when getting critiques
Sense of lacking agency	Lacking autonomy	
	Respect to hierarchy	
Community Capacity	Community Agency	Resistance to change and self-indulgence of the population
	Social ties and network	Loss of ties because of change of function
Structure and strategy of the local implementation of SMEP	Institutional and financial support	Lacking support from the mayor
		Lacking local financial support
		Lacking financial support from BMEC
		Lacking support from the new MSE (financial and institutional)
		Lacking knowledge by the MSE and mayor about SMEP
		Lacking interest of politicians in the projects
		Loss of support from schools
	Committee - organization, structure, centralization	Centralization of the committee
		The incompetence of the president of the committee
		Under-delegation/prevention of collaboration by the president
Communication	Lacking communication among social mobilizers	

Table 28. Socio-demographics of the social mobilizers interviewed in Carolina

Variables	Status of social mobilizers (total of 6 individuals) <i>* the numbers represent quantity of individuals</i>	
Gender	4 female / 2 male	
Age	3 between 41-50 years old 3 > 50 years old	
Marital status	4 married / 1 divorced / 1 single	
Education attainment	<i>College Degree: 6: majors:</i> 3 Pedagogy / 1 Mathematics / 1 Pedagogy & Language / 1 Pedagogy & Psychology → among them, 5 with graduate degree (all in the field of education)	
Religion	5 Catholic / 1 none	
Employment status or Position	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 4 MDE program coordinator 1 school teacher and Assistant MS of Education (director of the teaching department) 1 MS of Education	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 2 school pedagogical coordinator 1 college pedagogical coordinator 1 school pedagogical coordinator and teacher 1 MDE coordinator and council's member 1 municipal psychologist
Field of work	<i>2012-2013 (main SMEP years):</i> 5 Education 1 Education/Health	<i>2014-2017 (after municipal elections):</i> 4 Education 1 Education/Health 1 Social Work/Health

Vita

Erika Pioltine Anseloni

108 N Allegheny St. apt.3, Bellefonte, PA - 16823

814.777.5063 - kekaepa@yahoo.com

Education

- **Ph.D.**, International Development and Agriculture & Agricultural Extension and Education (majors), Comparative & International Education (minor) - **Penn State University**, State College, PA, 2014-2020
- **Graduate Certificate**, Management of Sustainability & Corporate Social Responsibility - **University of Campinas (Unicamp)**, Campinas, SP, Brazil, 2008-2009
- **M.S.**, Education - **São Paulo State University (UNESP)**, Rio Claro, Brazil, 2004-2006
- **B.S.**, Biology - **University of Campinas (Unicamp)**, Campinas, SP, Brazil, 1997-2001

Professional Experience

- **Penn State University (USA)**
Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant State College, PA 2014-2018
- **Gaia Social (Brazil)**
Community Needs Assessment Specialist Piumhi, MG 2018
Manager of Sustainable Regional Development Carolina, MA 2010-2013
Program Manager (Community Development) Campinas, SP 2010
- **Hewlett-Packard / T-Systems (Brazil)**
Environmental Analyst II São Paulo, SP 2007-2010
- **Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (Brazil)**
Program Coordinator (Environmental Education) Superagüi National Park, PR 2001-2003

Fellowships

- **Graduate Fellow at UNESCO Chair in Rural Community, Leadership & Youth Development** - Penn State University, 2014-2020
- **Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship**, Fulbright Commission and U.S. Department of State - College of Education, Penn State University, 2013-2014

Publications

- Erika Pioltine Anseloni (2017). Book Review: Community effects of leadership development education: Citizen empowerment for civic engagement. Published in: *Community Development*, 48:4, 603-605

Research Awards

- Gamma Sigma Delta Expo Research: 2nd place (2016)
- The North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Conference poster contest: 2nd place (2016)
- Gamma Sigma Delta Expo Research: 1st place (2015)

Relevant Training

- *College Teaching Certificate* - Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence - State College, PA, 09-12/2015
- *Leading with Emotional Intelligence* - American Management Association - New York, NY, 02/2014
- *International Development and Social Justice* – Institute for International Education - Atlanta, GA, 03/2014
- *Global Leadership for Social Change* - Institute for International Education - Washington, DC, 10/2013
- *Sustainable Local Development* – Gaia Social – Campinas, SP, Brazil, 06/2010
- *Tools for Participation/Engagement* – Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas - Nazaré Paulista, SP, Brazil, 02/2010
- *Theatre of the Oppressed for Social Change* – Mudança de Cena – São Paulo, SP, Brazil, 08-11/2004