POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE RELATIONS: HARMONY, TENSION AND AMBIGUITY IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE PORTUGUESE MINISTRY OF CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a conceptual and methodological systematisation of political-administrative relations between a governmental authority and the cultural organisations it supervises, allowing for the identification of situations of harmony, tension, neutrality, and ambiguity between the parties. A taxonomy is proposed for defining these concepts, as well as the ways in which these relational situations are expressed by the agents, based on empirical evidence that enables their characterization. The study was based on an exploratory and qualitative methodology. Content analysis was carried out on a corpus of press sources, with two rounds of coding (deductive and inductive). The corpus refers to the chosen case study - the Portuguese Ministry of Culture and its dependent cultural organizations. The results support the conceptualization proposed and explain the categories and variables relevant to the characterization of relational expressions. The research contributes to the diagnosis of these relationships, enhancing their transparency and cultural governance processes.

Keywords: public administration and policy, political-administrative relations, governance, cultural policy, cultural organisations

Introduction

This article proposes a conceptual and methodological systematisation of public institutional relations between a governmental authority and the cultural organisations it supervises, allowing for the identification and characterisation of situations of harmony, tension, neutrality, and ambiguity in the interactions between the parties' positionalities. A taxonomy is proposed for defining these concepts and understanding in which ways are they *expressed*, based on an empirical analysis that enables a qualitative characterization of each of these relational situations.

This working paper is part of a broader research program, consisting of its author's doctoral thesis[1], focused on the relationship between the Portuguese central government's Ministry of Culture and the cultural organizations under its direct dependence, analysing the underlying tensions and detecting how

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their different autonomy degrees impact their governance. The analysis of these political-administrative relations requires a prior definition of the object of study itself, allowing an understanding of the theoretical models and typologies of interaction between these agents. Therefore, the case study that guided the methodological design of this working paper is that of the Portuguese Ministry of Culture and the public cultural organizations under its direction and supervision. Although the resulting taxonomy may be useful for the analysis of other sectors, the nature of the data leads us to believe that it is particularly pertinent in understanding governance relations in the cultural sector.

Whether as a dependent or independent analytical variable, the institutional relations between a government and the public bodies it oversees are essential for understanding the political process and public sector governance. Svara (1999: 698) considers that the interaction between these agents "is so extensive and the interface is so close that their behaviour necessarily affects the political process". In addition to the impact that these relationships have on the implementation of public policies, in democratic contexts, citizens' perception of the legitimacy of public officials is also at stake. In this context, understanding the role of each of the parties, as well as the way in which they interrelate, is read by some authors as an imperative (Svara, 1999a: 309), namely for the improvement of governance models at the service of the good public.

The topic of political-administrative relations has been addressed in literature from various disciplinary frameworks, representing a meeting ground for multiple scientific areas, that still requires a scientific systematization. We highlight the literature on organizational autonomy and governmental control (Verhoest et al, 2004; Van Thiel et al, 2012; Bach, 2016); on public service bargains (Hood & Lodge, 2008); from organizational theory, namely the concept of micropolitics (Altrichter & Moosbrugger, 2015) and even the role of psychology and emotions in this field (Vigota-Gadot & Meisler, 2010). For the purposes of this article, we focus mainly on the theoretical ground provided by political science and public administration studies, as the politics of public administration.

Although dependent on the tutelage, supervision, and oversight of a member of the government who acts as the political leader (e.g. the minister of a given sector), public administration organizations are distinct agents in the political process, as recognized by the theoretical field of public administration since the 19th century. One of the models that has contributed most to understanding this basic distinction is the *politics-administration dichotomy*, considered to be "one of the oldest issues in the scientific study of Public Administration" (Ferraz, 2016). This model strictly separates two stages of the political process: political leaders are in charge of designing policies, and public administration leaders are in charge of implementing them, not interfering in each other's duties (Svara, 1998). The model clearly emphasizes "the seemingly absolute difference between politicians (partisan and responsive) and administrators (nonpartisan, neutral, and scientific)" (Svara, 1999a).

However, Svara (1998:51) also admits that the dichotomous model is not very useful as a descriptive guide to the real behaviours of political and administrative agents in political processes. In fact, the classic Weberian separation between the fields of politics and administration has been countered by an empirical reality that points to a comprehensive understanding of these agents' role and interdependent interactions (Svara, 2001). The so-called model of *political-administrative complementarity* is characterized by "interdependency, extensive interaction, distinct but overlapping roles, (...) with reciprocity of influence in both policy making and administration" (Svara, 1999). The contrast between dichotomy and complementarity can be located in the politics-administration interaction models proposed by Peters (1987, *apud* Ferraz, 2016).

These models of interaction between politics and administration, as called by Ferraz (2016), make it clear that rulers and administrators' preferences might or might not be aligned. Some of the models (I, V) emphasize vertical logics of power, in which one of the agents is strongly dependent on the other; others emphasize horizontal logics of power, either through voluntary collaboration (II, III) or competition (IV). The distinction between 'village life' and 'adversarial politics', for example, sustains the idea of contrasting relational systems based on opposition and agreement between the parties. Carboni (2010, 374) corroborates this thesis, arguing that the relationship between government and public administration "actually ranges from conflict and tension (…) to collaboration and cooperation". Fortis (2014, 257) highlights the possibility of a "prospective 'agonistic' public policy research agenda".

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It should be noted that a "logic of disharmony" between the parties (Hansen & Ejersbo, 2002) does not necessarily harm the political process; in fact, some authors argue that it might even present externalities that benefit democratic governance (Mouffe, 1993, 1-8; Bayerlein & Knill, 2019).

In the theoretical field of micropolitics (organizational theory), Altrichter and Moosbrugger (2015) draw attention to the existence of diverse interactions and relational situations that constitute endemic characteristics of the governance of public organizations: "political systems do have conflicting and cooperative elements. Collaboration, coalition, routine, unspoken nonaggression pacts, outspoken negotiations, political alliances, and obligations may establish comparatively smooth time spans in organizational life" (Altrichter and Moosbrugger, 2015). This reading considers several categories that represent relational situations of harmony, conflict, as well as circumstances of neutrality or ambiguity in interactions between the parties. Furthermore, the authors' argument leads us to formulate the hypothesis that these different and contradictory situations of interaction can coexist within the same political system, being expressed successively or even simultaneously in different areas of action. Demir (2009) also recognized the existence of a complex continuum in the types of action assumed by political agents and administrative agents, proposing a reading that considered different degrees of complementarity depending on the form of action and the roles played by these agents in the public service.

In summary, our reading of the aforementioned models leads us to recognize:

- the existence of each party's *preferences*: political and administrative leaders of public organizations may have the same, similar, different, or opposite preferences;
- that when one of these agents, knowing the other's preference, expresses its own, it is positioning itself in an aligned or misaligned way in the sphere of their interaction/ relation;
- that the agents' positioning, as well as the way they express it, may evolve or vary in degree/intensity, and may be ambiguous;
- that it would be limiting to read political-administrative relations only as structural models typical of a given national political-administrative tradition, and not also as transient and evolutive positioning (dis)encounters between agents, highly dependent of dynamic contexts.

Thus, the foundational argument of this article is that *the expression* of these agents' *preferences* translates into *an interaction/ relation* characterized, *at each given moment*, by a *continuum* of alignment-misalignment between them *on a given matter*.

But some questions arise: do our proposed concepts of harmony, tension, neutrality, and ambiguity – as a continuum of relational situations - provide a solid ground to describe and interpret the empirical reality? On what evidence is our understanding of these relational situations based? In this working paper we want to answer the following research questions:

(1) In what ways are the relational situations of harmony, tension, neutrality, and ambiguity *expressed* in the interactions between a governmental ministry and the heads of its supervised organisations?
(2) How can we *define* the relational situations of harmony, tension, neutrality, and ambiguity between these agents?

Our analysis results in a descriptive taxonomy of the way in which agents express alignment or misalignment between them. The relational situations under study are described and structured into categories. The different ways agents use to signal their positionality are interpreted. The decomposition of the relational categories that we propose – harmonies, tensions, neutrality and ambiguity – is based on the idea that the agents involved can use a multitude of strategies to assert their preferences and influence the implementation of political-administrative processes. Altrichter and Moosbrugger (2015, p. 135) list some of these tactics. The carried-out analysis allows the identification of multiple other forms of expression of relational states, based on empirical examples.

This article contributes to the literature on this field by applying a bottom-up perspective and qualitative methodology, allowing empirical observation to lead to a more detailed understanding of the

interactions in question, placing the focus on *the way in which relational dispositions are expressed*. The proposed taxonomy may be enriched in other ways not found in the analysed data; but it constitutes an original contribution to literature, bringing together in an exploratory way a set of expressions of harmony, tension, neutrality, and ambiguity in political-administrative relations. Furthermore, it is hoped that this map will contribute to a better diagnosis and understanding of interactions between agents in different governmental sectors and national contexts.

As for the structure of this working paper, after presenting the methodology in a logic of description of the procedure (research design, data collection methods, data analysis techniques), some of the preliminary results of the investigation are presented, as well as some implications and conclusions from of the data collected.

Methodology

Taking into account that our approach to this literature framework has not yet been sufficiently worked on, we opted for an exploratory and qualitative methodology that would contribute to the theoretical construction in this field through the construction of hypotheses, and as support for possible future quantitative approaches: identifying the diversity of phenomena detectable in the data, categorizing and describing the ways in which political and administrative agents express their positionality in the context of their relationship.

It was essential that the documentary nature of the empirical source made it possible to detect agreements and conflicts in political-administrative relations. The periodical press was chosen as our data source, with the expectation of being able to illustrate, in the diversity of article types (news, reports, interviews), public expressions of harmonies and tensions in political-administrative relations. The Portuguese daily newspaper "Público" was selected, as a journalistic reference in the Portuguese context, with regular coverage of the cultural sector, and because at the time of collection it was the only one to provide a search engine on its website that allowed search for specific terms in a wider timeframe (since 2000), including in physical editions of the newspaper in the pre-digital era. The used search terms were the names of the ministers and secretaries of state for culture in office between 2000-2019, approximately in the chronological frame of their mandates. 2078 press articles were pre-selected. Criteria were defined to identify the relevant articles, which should reference institutional relations between the agents in study and/or legislative/ political changes relating to this theme. 869 press articles that met these criteria were selected and collected.

This was followed by the data analysis stage, supported by the use of MAXQDA 2022 software. Although for the purposes of the doctoral thesis the design of the analysis was more complex, the part which is relevant to this working paper is a two-stage content analysis. First, a round of deductive coding, based on the literature's review, in which a set of pre-defined categories were chosen (corresponding to the 'relational *situations*' analytical dimension - "harmony", "tension", "ambiguous/ neutral"), and all the textual segments that corresponded to a broad understanding of each one of these concepts were codified[2]. Each segment corresponds to one or more sentences that make up a cohesive unit of meaning relating to each of the concepts.

These coded segments were analysed in a second round of inductive coding, in which we tried to break down the aforementioned categories in the light of the questions "how is the relational situation expressed?" and "which party expresses the relational situation?"[3], which corresponded to two

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[2] "Harmony" was broadly interpreted as an understanding, agreement, meeting of positions or rapprochement between the parties; "tension" as a disagreement, opposition, mismatch of positions or relational confrontation; "neutrality" as a refrain from expressing an opinion or passing judgment; and "ambiguity" as segments whose context does not allow us to confirm the existence of agreement or disagreement.

[3] Strauss and Corbin (2002: 81-5 *apud* Visscher & Robalino, 2018) also suggest the use of questions as analytical tools to group codes (e.g. "What?", "Who?", "How?", "When?"). These questions can be

analytical dimensions: the *expression* of the relational situation, and the *agent* who expresses it. This process resulted in the drawing up of a *taxonomy of relational expression* - with bottom-up theoretical contributions emanating from the interpretation of the coded segments - which allows for a definition and characterization of each relational situation and the ways they are expressed by the parties.

Preliminary Results

The first round of coding resulted in the compilation of 463 segments coded as harmony (36% of the total), 388 segments coded as tension (30%) and 450 segments coded as ambiguity/neutrality (35%), revealing the existence of a large sample of examples framed in each of the theorized relational situations, in the collected data.

The second round of coding focused on the analytical dimension of "expression of the relational situation". The results of the qualitative analysis reveal a diversity of different ways in which each agent expresses their position in the political-administrative relationship. The following tables present descriptive taxonomies that organize into categories the ways in which harmonies (Table 3) and tensions (Table 4) are expressed, discriminating the agents who expressed them. The taxonomy of the expression of ambiguities and neutralities is still being developed, not yet appearing in the preliminary results of this working paper.

Table 3 - Expressions of Harmony		
Agent	**Expression**	**Description**
Ministry	Praising/ defending	Praising the organization's administration, as well as agreeing with its decision or defend its actions.
	Manifesting commitment	Discursively manifesting a commitment, promise or guarantee with the organization.
	Strengthening organic power	Strengthening the organization's power, through its formal autonomy, assigned competencies, or others; implicit confidence in the abilities of its administration.
	Reinforcing resources	Strengthening or consolidating the organization's means/resources, or its assets.
	Attributing cumulative position	Assigning new functions or positions to the administration of an organization (reinforcing power and/or expressing trust).
	Visiting	Visiting the organization's facilities or other relevant locations for different types of events.
	Associating	Wanting to get involved in a participatory way in an initiative promoted by the organization.
	Accepting proposal/request	Approving or corresponding to a initiative, proposal, choice, or even a personal request of the administration.
	Negotiating with third parties	Interacting or negotiating with another agent, in order to benefit the organization.
	Highlighting competence	Explicitly mentioning that a certain decision is a duty/ competence of the administration, or authorizing a decision of them, in contexts of expression of trust.
	Favoring Comparatively	Privileging one organization in a decision, compared to others or to the detriment of others.
	Other	Other expressions

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crossed with a theoretical coding model proposed by Glasser (Requena et al., 2006, 37–40, *apud* Visscher & Robalino, 2018), composed of theoretical families (e.g. types, units, strategies, processes). Inspired by these models and their operationalization by Visscher and Robalino (2018), we synthesized a set of questions that allowed us to systematically decompose the initial codes.

Admin.	Praising/ defending	Praising the Ministry, as well as explicitly agreeing with its choice or defending its actions.
	Agreeing implicitly	Declaring an opinion in a context that allows implicit or indirect alignment with the Ministry.
	Decisions that indicate alignment	Formal acts/ decisions that demonstrate contextual alignment with the Ministry.
Mutual	Horizontal coordination	Developing joint, coordinated or negotiated work. Mutual communication, in multiple forms (listening, transmitting information...).
	Agreeing	Having an aligned (common or similar) opinion or preference regarding a topic; in cases where it is not identified who first pronounced the agreement.
	Jointly announcing	Making a joint public statement, in which a decision, a promise, or results are presented.
	Administrator leaving without conflict	Administrator leaving his position, either at his own request or due to the end of his term of office, in an explicit context of no tension.
	Ministry reappointing administration	Renewing an administrator's mandate, implying an alignment between the Ministry that appoints and the administrator that accepts the appointment.
	Personal relations	Expression of the existence of friendship, personal esteem or trust that go beyond the exercise of public functions.

Table 4 – Expressions of Tension		
Agent	**Expression**	**Description**
Ministry	Pressing	Coercing or influencing in order to pressure the administration to change its position on a specific option, or to intimidating it in general.
	Teasing	Expressing displeasure through speech or actions, with animosity and/or irony, targeting the organization in an "unpleasant" / unseemly manner.
	Going into rupture	Strongly express broad disagreement or personal disapproval regarding the organization's administration, often irrevocably.
	Making decision against	Making a political choice that goes against a prior preference or choice of the organization's administration.
	Not communicating	Not communicating with the administration, or not fostering dialogue with them.
	Limiting resources	Reducing budgetary resources allocated to the organization, or not increasing them in controversial contexts or in situations of clear shortfall.
	Conveying insecurity	Acting in a non-committal manner or in a manner that creates uncertainty for the administration, in a publicly tense context.
	Removing competencies	Reducing organizational competences or autonomy, in a tense or controversial context, whether or not these changes are formally expressed.
	Dismissing/ exonerating	Taking the decision to dismiss the administration or exonerate it in a tense context.
	Not reappointing mandate	Removing the incumbent administration, not renewing, or making it difficult to renew it after their mandate has expired (in a tense or controversial context)
	Others	Other expressions

Admin.	Disagreeing	Expressing a preference that differs from that of the Ministry, or discomfort about an option, in a slight, non-definitive or not automatically consequential way.
	Pressing	Coercing or influencing in order to put pressure on the Ministry to change its position on a specific option, or to intimidate it in general.
	Teasing	Expressing displeasure through speech, with animosity and/or irony, aimed at the Ministry in an "unpleasant" / unseemly way.
	Going into rupture	Strongly expressing broad disagreement or personal disapproval regarding the Ministry, often irrevocably.
	Not communicating	Not communicating with the Ministry.
	Resigning	Taking the decision to ask the Ministry to end their mandate, in a tense context.
	Not accepting reappointment	Expressing the decision not to stand for reappointment, or not to accept being reappointed, in a tense context.
	Others	Other expressions
Mutual	Disagreeing	Expressing different preferences on a given issue, in cases where it is not clear who first expressed the disagreement.
	Pressuring each other (arm wrestling)	Exerting coercion, with the clear intention of influencing the other party to give in to their position; generating an institutional impasse.
	Going into rupture	Exchange of accusations, strong expressions of broad disagreement or personal disapproval, in unsustainable institutional interaction.
	Not communicating	Lack of contact between the parties due to unwillingness, lack of initiative or the "silent game".

Furthermore, we highlight the detection of internal variations in many relational expressions. Four analytical axes stand out, which we present in simplified form as binomials in order to understand their nature: formal *vs* informal; active *vs* passive; direct *vs* indirect; explicit *vs* implicit; public *vs* private. These binomials apply to both harmonies and tensions. Each of them can be interpreted as its own axis, although it is not unreasonable to interpret that they can be articulated with each other, and that they can contribute in many cases to diagnosing and situating a particular expression in the main axis under study - that of the relational situation ("harmony - neutrality/ ambiguity - tension").

(1) *Formal* expressions tend to be documental in nature, being the subject of decisions by the agents that materialize in legal diplomas, regulations, etc; or they might refer to the exercise of enshrined or delegated powers. *Informal* expressions tend to be associated with oral statements, in the discretionary use of each agent's soft power.

(2) In *active* expressions, agents *act* or produce a statement. *Passive* expressions cover situations in which harmony or tension is detected from something the agents *don't* do; decisions they don't make (e.g., not dismissing an administration at a time of crisis) or statements they don't produce (absence of communication, refraining from public comment, etc.).

(3) In *direct* expressions, interaction occurs unequivocally between the two agents under study here. In *indirect* expressions, harmony or tension can be manifested in other, less linear forms (e.g. legislation that indirectly benefits/harms the organization, praise for the organization's workers but not directly for the administration).

(4) *Explicit* expressions make clear the intention of the agent expressing them. In *implicit* expressions, harmony or tension is expressed in a vaguer, veiled and sometimes uncompromising way.

(5) *Public* expressions originally take place in the media space of the press, or in the public space (e.g. at events open to civil society) and may contain a performative dimension. *Private* expressions take place "behind the scenes", without journalistic intermediation or public announcement of positions (even so, their existence can be verified in this documentary source by leaks, revelation by one of the agents, or after the fact).

Preliminary Discussion

Although our analysis was not mainly focused on quantitative terms, it should be noted that the very significant balance between the volume of examples identified in each of the main categories of relational situations seems to validate the utility of the chosen data source and methodological design. The data seems to indicate the plausibility of the existence of a *relational continuum*, from harmony to tension, in which the agents' expressions can be situated. The empirical data points to an abundance of examples of these different relational situations in the chosen case, over an extended time window. Although the preliminary analysis does not yet provide a breakdown and characterization of the "neutrality/ambiguity" situation, the results suggest that ambiguous phenomena need to be considered as a middle ground between harmony and tension, to properly characterize these relationships, and to further understand their impacts on cultural management.

The analysis reveals that the diagnosis of the relation situations, through the framing of their expressions into categories, is a process that it is highly dependent on context. While some expressions of harmony and tension are easy to identify, many others depend on interpretative factors that allow the positioning of the agents to be placed. When the minister does not reappoint the administration for a new term, this does not necessarily constitute a manifestation of tension; but in a context where there are already contrasting positions between the agents, it becomes plausible that this is the scenario. The same is true when the minister explains the competences of an organization: in a given context, this statement can be read as an expression of harmony. The context can also contribute to the reading of aggravating factors: a cut in funding has a dimension of tension; but if it is preceded by a commitment to increase funding, or if it occurs at the same time as an increase in funding from another organization (i.e. in comparative terms, by contrast), the tension is more marked.

Preliminary results also show the diversity of forms and intensities in which situations of harmony, tension and ambiguity are manifested in the relationship between a governmental ministry and organisations under its supervision, expressed by each of the parties, either in top-down and bottom-up scenarios. A preliminary comparison between the minister's expressions and those of the administration reveals a greater abundance of diversity in the minister's expressions. This may be due to the fact that the minister has more formal power in the relationship, and a number of formal instruments and channels for expressing his position vis-à-vis the organization's management. This does not mean that the administration has no power, but it is less natural for it to reward or punish its government official; this happens mainly through discourse and the political damage it can cause in public opinion. It also doesn't mean that the ministry always chooses to express its tension through formal channels, and in some cases, it is in its interest to take the informal route, exerting pressure in the form of soft power.

Among the bottom-up expressions, we highlight the specificities of a particular expression of harmony: *horizontal* interaction between agents reveals an attitude on the part of the government to share some power with the supervised organization, either through the form of collaboration or negotiation processes in which the preferences of the administrations are considered, approaching Peters' model of political-administrative integration, described as "village life" (Peters, 1987). This horizontality should be contrasted with *vertical* forms of harmony closer to Peters' formal model, based on the obedience of administrators and a "yes, minister" attitude towards the minister.

As it were expected, one of the concepts to be explored in depth when analysing these political-administrative relationships is that of trust (Jacobsen, 1999). In fact, many expressions of harmony imply an expression of trust between the parties, particularly from the ministry towards the organization's administration, namely towards its ability to implement policies. More than rewards, these expressions are indicators that make it possible to identify a sufficient degree of harmony between the parties in the positioning of the agents. At the same time, expressions of tension can indicate a lack of trust. The presence or absence of trust can be a determining factor in the evolution of these relationships.

Expressions of tension are the most obvious reflection of Peters' (1987) adversarial model. The administration chooses, in its discretion, to say "no, minister"; and the government tries to "take absolute control of the organization away from the leaders" (Ferraz, 2016). If the expressions "dismissing/ exonerating" and "resigning" are the height of this situation, the expression "breaking up" is also a form of total opposition between the agents. This small set can be read as a group in which the tension is already fully realized; the other forms of tension precede them and may or may not result in their maximum form.

Some expressions of harmony may just be a public appearance that contrasts with tensions behind the scenes. Altrichter and Moosbrugger (2015) highlighted the importance of distinguishing between consensual and forced consensus in relations between agents. It is important to note that the proposed taxonomy is based only on the judgment that can be made from the context of the chosen documental source. Additionally, it would be naive to read all expressions of harmony as disinterested acts aimed solely at benefiting the agent to whom they are addressed, and they may have a simultaneously (or exclusively) self-serving objective. When the ministry is praising or defending an administration, it may be self-validating the government's strategy. When the administration does so with the tutelage in mind, this positioning can be a way of putting pressure on the tutelage to respond to this praise. This doesn't mean that these interested expressions of harmony necessarily hide a veiled tension, or a vertical relationship that harms one of the parties; it could just mean that the situation of public harmony can be capitalized on to the benefit of both agents. In this perspective, the exchange of validation can contribute to the status of the agents, both to the institutional consolidation of the organization and to the political capital of the government. Alternatively, it might the institutional consolidation of the organization and/or the political capital of the government that create the conditions for establishing harmony, based the power of each agent at a given moment.

One of the values of qualitative analysis is "what was found", but also "what was not found", which is in itself a reason for questioning, at least when it comes to content analysis with a substantially large corpus like this one. In the proposed taxonomy, we detected the existence of disagreements (as mere positions of principle) as an expression of tension on the part of the administration, but not on the part of the ministry: we interpreted that the asymmetry of power between the minister and the administration makes it difficult to read in the "disagreement" expressed by a minister a mere position of principle, which could be assumed to be tendentially inconsequential. The ministerial disagreement carries a weight that somehow threatens a consequence, whether in the form of pressure, provocation or rupture with the administration. This difference in the expression of "disagreement" between the agents seems to be a particularly useful example, as it reveals the vertical hierarchy of power that governs political-administrative interaction.

Finally, we would like to point out that the proposed taxonomy is only an aggregate of the expressions most explicitly detected as fitting into the categories of relational situation that we have chosen on the basis of the conceptualization of the subject set out in the introduction to this working paper; it also depends on the method of documentary analysis on which this construction is based. To illustrate the unfinished nature of this classification, we pose the question of whether the normal functioning of institutions can also be read as a mutual expression of harmony; that is, harmony not only as something visible, "expressible", newsworthy, but also as something verifiable in a state of "non-news". The hypothesis that these periods in which there is no news in the press reveal something about the political-administrative relational situation reinforces the idea that the design of a more complete taxonomy will require complementarity with other sources of information.

Conclusion

This working paper proposes an alternative framing of political-administrative relations, as situational and dynamic dispositions, characterized by a continuum of alignment-misalignment between a ministry and the administration of public organizations, that is expressed by the interaction between these agents' preferences. The presented innovative system of categorisation compiles, in an unprecedented (although non-comprehensive) way, concrete expressions of the harmonies, tensions and relational ambiguities

between a government authority and the organisations that depend on it, proposing a set of variables to guide future research on this matter, on different empirical data sets and governmental sectors. It also identifies ways in which these expressions may vary.

The taxonomy proposes a reading grid that contributes to the readability of political-administrative relations, by diagnosing relational states and how they can evolve over time, taking into account the position and role of each agent in the space of interaction of political processes (not only in the implementation stage). It is hoped that as a diagnostic tool - with the potential to be applied to other political sectors, other scales (e.g. local government), or governance contexts in other countries - it has the potential to contribute to increasing the transparency of political-administrative relations, as well as improving the effectiveness of the effects/consequences of political implementation. However, as the empirical analysis of this proposal focused on cultural policy the Portuguese Ministry of Culture, we propose that the interpretation of these results could be particularly useful for understanding the dynamics in this sector, which is rarely targeted in the study of political-administrative relations.

Naturally, the working paper has its limitations; the proposed taxonomy is only exploratory. Most of the relational expressions detected are restricted to those with a public presentation. These are apparent harmonies and tensions, as recorded in the journalistic record; there may be other unobservable expressions. In addition, it is possible that there are other factors that affect political-administrative relations that are not detectable through their "expressions" and may not even fall within a spectrum of alignment between expressions of harmony and tension.

The elaboration of this matrix results from the methodological choices. On the one hand, not all the relevant interactions for the analysis of these political-administrative relations can be found in the periodical press. The nature of the source conditions the results found and the proposed taxonomy. On the other hand, the choice of this single case study (Portuguese Ministry of Culture) may constitute a limitation of the study, conditioning the generalization of the results. On the other hand, its specificity allows for a problematization that can be particularly useful for the cultural sector as an area of government.

However, the results seem to validate, or at least do not contradict, the conceptualization and theoretical concepts set out in this working paper. This basis will allow us, in the next stages of the doctoral thesis to be developed, to search for the causes/reasons behind these relational expressions. The consequences that these relational expressions and situations have on the governance of public organizations and on the development of the various stages of public policy will also remain to be diagnosed. To this end, new stages of content analysis will be carried out, proposing new breakdowns of the codes, the search for other relevant variables and the use of complementary data sources.

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