

SOCIAL MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL CONTROL: opportunities and challenges of direct participation¹

GESTÃO SOCIAL E CONTROLE SOCIAL: oportunidades e desafios da participação direta

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RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho é identificar e discutir as possibilidades da gestão Social como uma possibilidade para exercer o controle social. A discussão apresenta uma visão geral das possibilidades e desafios da construção da Gestão Social como alternativa para a realização do controle social, considerando as possibilidades e desafios desta finalidade. O trabalho é baseado em uma perspectiva essencialmente teórica; no entanto, é propositivo em termos de resultados.

Palavras-chave: controle Social. Gestão social. Participação.

SUMMARY

The objective of this work is to identify and discuss the possibilities of Social Management as an opportunity for social control. The discussion provides an overview of the possibilities and challenges of the construct of Social Management as an alternative for the realization of social control, considering the possibilities and challenges of this purpose. The work is based on an essentially theoretical perspective; however, in terms of results it is purposeful.

Key words: Social Control. Social Management. Participation.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, the 1988 Federal Constitution - CF 1988 - promoted a change in the relationship between the state and society, in three main aspects: consolidation of autonomy in the municipalities; decentralization of resources, and creation of mechanisms for social participation. The municipality is now seen as the principal space for the design and management of public policies (OLIVEIRA; PEREIRA; OLIVEIRA, 2007).

This new reality, after more than two decades of military dictatorship, brings an enormous challenge for Brazilian society, as it moves from an era where discussing public management was, in a way, “dangerous”, or was even prohibited, to a second era where this debate is not only “possible” but there are also spaces set up for this purpose, institutionally achieved by CF 1988.

Some research has shown problems with regard to representative democracy, which would not be meeting the demands of the Latin American population (SANTOS; BAQUERO, 2007) and specifically in Brazil (LÜCHMANN, 2007). Research conducted between 1995 and 2006 in Latin America shows an overall decline in public confidence in democracy, viewing it as an idealized model (KORSTANJE, 2007). However, this distrust may not be in democracy itself, but with a variant of democracy that came from outside and was introduced to Ibero-American people (VOUGA, 2001). Quoting Tocqueville (1987), the author criticizes having as a paradigm American democracy, in which it is understood that models of democracy cannot be “exportable”.

It is possible to say that we are living in a time where the most effective popular participation in public administration is urgently required. This urgency is based on two ideas which complement each other: 1) more effective use of public resources; and 2) fighting against corruption. In addition to these ideas, there is a third which can be included in a long term perspective - the establishment of a national project.

In some manner, the opportunities for participation have been created, but they remain spaces where participation is through representation, such as in the Management Councils of Public Policy or the Participatory Budget, for example. Social control in this context can be considered an institutional achievement that has not yet been fully accomplished in practice. On the other hand, Social Management appears to be an objective possibility of operational social control in structures that are already deployed or even in the creation of other spaces.

The discussion presented here shows the tension between direct and indirect participation (through representation). It is not the intention of this paper to consider the intricacies of the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of these types of participation. However, as in the discussion by Lüchmann (2007) it is important to note that representation presents several problems, the main one being the very ability of a person or small group to “represent” others, due to problems in communication, understanding, ideology and so on. On the other hand, direct participation has the obvious difficulty of the sheer number of people that, depending on the way they act, can derail the individual’s participation.

In this paper we will assume that direct participation, in an environment built on representative democracy (from the president of the association or union, through the councilor, mayor, congressman, governor, senator and president), can in a way be considered a “novelty” in public administration. We start from the premise that this direct participation can receive contributions from the construct of—

Social Management, as will be discussed here. Therefore, the objective of this work is to identify and discuss the possibilities of Social Management as a tool of social control.

This paper is organized into four sections besides this introduction. The key constructs of this work are outlined as follows: social control and social management; then the discussions will be presented, followed by the closing comments.

2 SOCIAL CONTROL

When referring to the concept of social control in Brazil, it is common for authors to link it to the theme of popular participation. The discussion of types of social control must use instances provided by the state at its different levels, for the participation or monitoring and control of public policies as well as spending and government investments. In addition, the terms social control and direct democracy are considered synonymous in this context, i.e. social control is achieved only through direct community participation, either individually or through “collective subjects” as the segmented institutions and representatives of civil society are commonly known (RIBEIRO FILHO *et al*, 2008).

The most common means or instances of participation, discussed in the theoretical framework of social control, are the management councils of public policies and conferences (ASSIS; VILLA, 2003, BRAVO; CORREIA, 2012, VERA; LVALLE, 2012; GURGEL; JUSTEN, 2013, SCHOMMER; DAHMER; SPANIOL, 2014, SILVA, 2014), and the most cited are those related to health. It is important to note here that social control is usually connected to these “collective subjects”, i.e. in practice it is usually conducted by the representatives, legitimately elected by the represented. At the appropriate time, we will return to this point.

Social control is known as the role of organized civil society in the public policies management and essentially consists of a field of social relations, in which the subjects participate through different means, which are processed in the internal and external context of institutional spaces (ASSIS; VILLA, 2003). It is also considered reinforcement and an important condition for the work of internal and external control of government agencies, i.e. the degree of social control influences naturally, increasing the quality of work of the institutions that perform internal and external control of the government and its agencies (RIBEIRO FILHO *et al*, 2008).

Historically, social control was perceived as control by civil society over the state in the context of social struggles against the dictatorship and in relation to the redemocratization of the country (BRAVO; CORREIO, 2012) and, for this reason, the expression “social control” has become synonymous with civil society’s control over state actions.

However, control is one of the administrative functions embedded in the paradigm of scientific management based on the Classical School, since Fayol and Taylor. Administrative functions are to plan, organize, run and control (MOTTA; VASCONCELLOS, 2006).

In public administration, control is essential since the resources involved are not private but public, and as such they should be committed to the interests and objectives of this public. When combining the word “control” with the term “social”, it gives a sense of the origin of control, therefore, social control would be a control that originates in society (SILVA, 2014).

For effective control and monitoring of public resources, whether financial, human or otherwise, access is required to the information on where these resources are, how they were used and by what criteria or public policies. For this, it is pertinent to discuss the accessibility to public information and the quality of this information. There are several channels available to the community when it comes to the availability of information of public management. These channels still have much to improve, especially in small municipalities, city halls and chambers, but Brazil already has a good amount of democratic institutions for this purpose. According to Schommer, Dahmer and Spaniol (2014), there are the public policy councils, conferences, public hearings, ombudsman and laws, including those of the Multi-Year Plan (PPA), Budgetary Guidelines (LDO), the Annual Budget (LOA), Fiscal Responsibility - Fiscal Responsibility Law (Complementary Law 101/2000), Transparency (Complementary Law 131/2009) and the Access to Information-LAI (Law 12.527 / 2011).

However, “the mere establishment of legal and structural devices can result in a jumble of rules and redundant mechanisms because they don’t match the citizenship skills developed in Brazilian civil society” (SILVA, 2014, p.124). In Brazil, public information is intricate and scattered across multiple channels and heterogeneous in both form and content. The Brazilian population has a history that results in a tendency towards passivity, while at the same time believing that problems can be resolved through the state, as if it were the only way, without the collective construction that is born of a welfare state “which teaches everybody to expect everything from it, awakens the popular expectation of seeing in its rulers, or searching in them, the savior, protector and father of the destitute” (FAORO, 2003, p.6).

Brazil has developed a strong democratic maturity through creating multiple channels of transparency of the actions of public officials, but has limitations in advancing the concept of citizenship when dealing with the education of the population. The Brazilian people have not evolved the practice of participation throughout their history, much less received any explanation from formal education of how this can be done. The education system is at the heart of this problem, since civic education was not included in elementary or high school curriculum, and they do not seem to be moving in this direction. Paulo Freire (1987; 2001) affirms that political participation is born and is strengthened through participatory practice, where it can give birth to critical awareness. However, for this awareness to be awakened, one way is the formal teaching of the formation of citizenship, and another is the very participation itself.

It is the practice of social movements that social and cultural subjects, which constitute political subjects are deceived. They build knowledge, values, culture. Educational processes of these subjects arise from tensions, conflicts, contradictions of the prevailing social order (LOPES, 2006, p.21).

The public policy management councils are regarded as the main mechanism of social control and popular participation currently in Brazil. At this point there is indeed the possibility of participation, even if segmented, of society in order to ensure classist and collective interests together with public power. In this respect there are many studies linking social control to the actions of management councils, especially municipal councils (ASSIS; VILLA, 2003, BRAVO; CORREIA, 2012, VERA; LAVALLE, 2012, GURGEL; JUSTEN, 2013, SCHOMMER; DAHMER; SPANIOL, 2014, SILVA, 2014). The

issue to be discussed is whether these councils are able to respond to society as a whole in relation to the responsibility of the supervision and control of public policies and sectoral spending. Another important matter which is also much discussed when it comes to management councils is their independence as institutions, which necessarily involves the technical expertise and autonomy of the councilors to carry out a project consistent with the original proposal for the creation of the councils.

Finally, it is imperative to highlight the ordinary citizen in this process, in contrast to increased institutionalization of participation. Namely, the extent to which the demand for participation through formal institutions grows (as in the case of councils and conferences), ordinary citizens face challenges in participating as they cannot easily access the mechanisms of participation. In the case of ombudsmen, where a public institution has one, these are only an institutional device and not an institution open to participation of ordinary citizens, even if they deal with collective issues.

Decree 8243, May 23, 2014, recently entered into force, establishing the National Policy for Social Participation (PNPS) and Article 6 contains the bodies and mechanisms of social participation, and once again highlighted the institutionalized participation, more and more solidified in the new Brazilian democratic system. The bodies and mechanism are: I - public policy councils; II –the public policy committee; III –the National Conference; IV –the federal ombudsman; V –the dialogue committee; VI –the intercouncil forum; VII - open hearings; VIII - public consultation; and IX –a virtual environment for social participation (BRAZIL, 2014). However, in October of the same year, soon after the re-election of the current government of the Workers Party, the mentioned decree runs the risk of losing its effect, even before entering into force, as the House of Representatives did not agree with its contents. The position of the Senate remains to be decided.

A more qualified discussion of social control in Brazil is urgently needed, in order to highlight the institutions that act as participation mechanisms, especially at the local level as that is where the public has greater proximity with the public administration. Moreover, it is also urgent to discuss ways to “educate” or raise awareness in the general population to access the various channels of transparency in force today in all spheres of government. This process is slow and evolutionary, but Brazil has taken important steps in this direction in just under ten years, with the creation of laws and regulations on the transparency of public information and the increasing openness to popular participation, even though this is most often institutionalized and representative.

In addition to the representation and institutionalization of laws and processes in public bodies that enable social participation, a field of knowledge and practice known as Social Management has been developed in Brazil. In this field, the issue of participation assumes considerable importance and consensus among researchers and activists, despite the controversies and debates within it. The following section will present this social management more closely and seek to point to the centrality of participation.

3 SOCIAL MANAGEMENT

Social management has been discussed in Brazil since the 1990s, with international initiatives such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Initially, Social Management was understood to be management of public social policies; however, this understanding is now outdated (TENORIO, 1998; 2012; CANÇADO; PEREIRA; TENORIO, 2013).

In Brazil there are already dozens of research centers that focus on this theme, and there is a National Meeting of Social Management Researchers, which held its 8th edition in 2014, plus a network of Social Management researchers (RGS) (RGS, 2014). In addition, several journals have been created in recent years, directly referencing the theme: Notebooks of Social Management (2007), Public Administration and Social Management (2009), Social Nau (2010) and the Interdisciplinary Journal of Social Management (2012). There are also undergraduate courses, specialization courses and Masters Courses (MENDONÇA; GONÇALVES-DIAS; JUNQUEIRA, 2012).

Even with all this “movement” around the Social Management, it can be said that there is still no consensus on the concept. However, there have been considerable theoretical advances that allow some inferences to be identified.

Tenorio (1998) was the pioneering researcher of Social Management in Brazil, presenting Social Management as a way of management that contrasts with strategic management (management of organizations for profit, based on utilitarian rationality). To Tenorio (2008b, p.158, emphasis added) Social management is understood:

As a dialogical management process in which the decision-making authority is shared among the participants of the action (action that may occur in any social system - public, private or non-governmental organizations). The adjective “social” qualifying the noun “management” is to be understood as the privileged space of social relations in which everyone has the right to speak with no forms of coercion (emphasis added).

França Filho (2003, p.2) believes “[...] it is necessary to consider two levels of analysis or perception of social management: on the one hand, that which identifies with a problem of society; and on the other, that which associates it to a specific type of management.” In the same vein, “Social management can be defined as one oriented to the social (as a purpose) by the social (as a process), guided by the principles of ethics and solidarity” (FISCHER; MELO, 2006, p.17).

It is noted that this bidimensionality of Social Management, common to França Filho’s works (2003) and Fischer and Melo (2006) makes the concept complex, but in a more direct definition,

[Social management] therefore, corresponds to the management of the organizations acting in a circuit that is not originally that of the market and the state, even though in most cases these organizations form relationships with private and public institutions through various forms of partnership to carry out projects. This is the very space of the so-called civil society, that is, a public sphere of action that is not the state (FRANÇA FILHO, 2008, p.32).

According to Carrion (2007) Social Management is focused on “good” local governance, in which, besides there being room for democratic and deliberative citizen participation, there must also be conditions for this participation, considering the conflict of interest as part of the democratic project. Nevertheless, “the big challenge is to achieve interaction [between state, society and market] be given on the basis of solidarity” (CARRION, 2007, p.163).

According to Cançado, Pereira and Tenorio (2013, p.132) “social management is the collective decision-making without coercion, based on the intelligibility of language, dialog and enlightened

understanding as a process, with transparency as a prerequisite and emancipation as the ultimate aim”. Broadening the scope of the definition, the authors classify Social Management as “a dialectical process of social organization of the public sphere, based on the clearly understood interest, and which aims for the emancipation of man” (CANÇADO; PEREIRA; TENORIO, 2013 p.187). This scope is taken as a Weberian ideal.

The theoretical categories identified for Social Management, based on the existing literature, are: clearly understood interests, emancipation, the public sphere and Adornian Negative Dialectics; as shown in Figure 1.

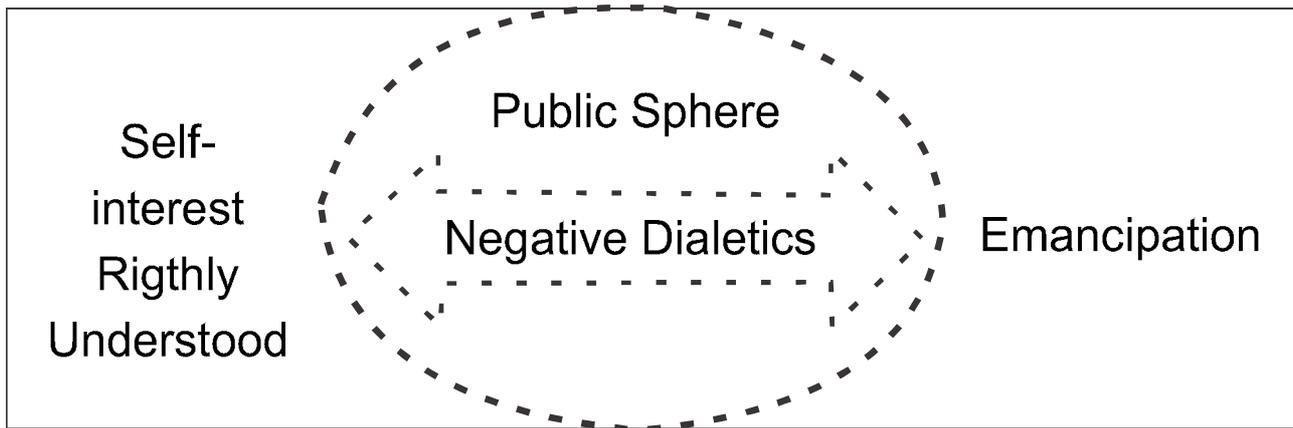


Figure 1 – The Main Theoretical Categories of Social Management

Source: Adapted from Cançado, Pereira and Tenorio (2013).

Translation: Interesse Bem Compreendido: Sel-interest Righthly Understood; Esfera Pública: Public Sphere; Emancipação: Emancipation; Dialética Negativa: Negative Dialectics.

It is worth mentioning the role of Adorno’s negative dialectics (2009) in this construct, as in Adornian’s negative dialectics there is no synthesis, only thesis and antithesis (represented by the arrow pointing in opposing directions). In turn, the clearly understood interest is characterized by the interdependence between individual interest and collective interest, thus to be fulfilled the individual interests, it is necessary that the collective interests also are. The emancipation here is understood as escaping from the guardianship, to think for yourself (CHAUI, 2011).

Some of the above definitions deal with solidarity, i.e. realize that Social Management relies on the premise of interdependence between people (FISCHER; MELO, 2006; CARRION, 2007). This can be interpreted both in the sense of individual actions and activities related to the common good. In other words, it is understood that life involves a coexistence with other people and the actions taken by those people influence the lives of others. França Filho (2003; 2008), in turn, speaks of civil society in terms of a non-state public sphere as a space for social management. In this sense, according to the authors, it can be said that Social Management presupposes the collective decision-making, as full interdependence only makes sense if this perspective is considered. Furthermore, the civil society, presented by França Filho (2003; 2008) assumes a participatory management in the broad sense of the term. Tenorio (2008a; 2008b), Cançado (2013) and Cançado, Pereira and Tenorio (2013), in turn, make it clear that in Social Management decision making is collective.

Based on these definitions above, one can say that at least one consensus, being the participation on Social Management is essential. Not all participations relate to Social Management, but Social

Management as a whole is based on participation, even, one dares to say, a direct participation. Even when different conceptions of social management are presented, such as those of Boullosa and Schommer (2008; 2009), Araújo (2012) and even the criticism by Pinho (2010) about the possibilities of social management in our society, one aspect can be considered a consensus in the literature - that the collective decision-making and participation in the decision-making process is a hallmark of Social Management. According to Cançado, Pereira and Tenorio (2013) these features can be considered as a first paradigm of Social Management.

From this point, one can present developments as assumptions concerning the Social Management: 1) everyone has the right and the duty to participate in decisions that influence their life; and 2) everyone has the intrinsic ability to participate.

The first assumption is reasonable, because if a decision influences a person's life then that person must have not only the right, but also the duty to participate in the process. Rather that person has the inherent duty to participate and for this needs the right to do so. Clearly considering in this case, only people who have their civil capacities²

²See Brazilian Civil Code, Law 10.406/2002.

The second premise has more potential for controversy. The current civil society is highly complex. Cultural, political, socio-economic and other aspects as a whole impress on society notable differences that may or may not favor participation. In addition, the technicality coupled with the varying levels of bureaucracy in organizations complicate the application of the inherent capacity for participation. In the case of public organizations, for example, there is a high level of bureaucracy. Then there is the importance of the individual technocrat – the person who at least in theory “knows the legal ways” of the processes, as discussed in Tenório (2008b). In this sense, “[...] social management is the replacement of techno-bureaucratic, monological management, for a more participatory, dialogical management, in which decision-making is exercised by the different actors involved” (TENÓRIO, 2008b, p. 75).

In addition, there is a “deification” of formal education and specialization and, in a higher body, of science itself (SANTOS, 2003; FEYERABEND, 2007). Thus there is a clear division between those “who know” and “those who do not know,” which could justify the non-participation of everyone in the process, as the decision-making process should be performed by those who “know what they are doing” because they were “prepared for it” (MOTTA, 1981). This argument is the basis of Pinho's (2010) criticism regarding the possibilities of Social Management in Brazil.

The argument used here is that such separation is artificial and arbitrary, perhaps even ideological. Regardless, it generates unequal power relations that at least indirectly are also responsible for social inequalities. The decision makers are clearly not neutral and tend towards maintaining such a structure of exclusion. It is understood that this is a much longer discussion than the one that has been presented here and there are other arguments without further discussion. However, the perception held here aligns with Freire (1986; 1997; 2001) who suggests that participation is learned by participating and that formal education is obviously important, but a lack thereof should not be considered a criterion for exclusion. Even with several problems, participation is in itself an educational process (FREIRE, 1986; 1997; 2001; ROSAVALLON, 1979; LÜCHMANN, 2007). In relation to Social Management, some authors suggest the “learning by doing” approach (BOULLOSA; SCHOMMER, 2008; 2009; BOULLOSA, 2009; ARAÚJO, 2012).

Another relevant issue is the neutrality of science, which is elevated towards absolute truth, even if it is considered that scientific knowledge is inherently temporary and therefore subject to replacement by its own advancement. According to Chalmers (1993, p.17) “science owes part of its high esteem to the fact that it is seen as a modern religion [...]”. Science is a form of knowledge, but not necessarily the most important (CHALMERS, 1993; 1994; SANTOS, 2003; FEYERABEND, 2007).

Many people view the alleged neutrality and impartiality of science as inauthentic; a perception encouraged by the increasingly common phenomenon of disagreement between specialists on opposing sides of a politically sensitive debate around the substance of scientific fact (CHALMERS, 1994, p.11).

To close the argument it may be said that the technocrats and experts do not necessarily make the best decisions in terms of the common good, even in situations where the common good is the objective.

In view of these issues and controversies, how can direct participation actually come about? The following section will consider this aspect.

4 DIRECT PARTICIPATION: A UTOPIA OR “BETTER LATE THAN NEVER”?

The means of social control established in Brazil were created within the tradition of representative participation. It is inferred here that this option was followed given the operational difficulties of direct participation of a large number of people. According to Dahl (2001, p.125), “the more citizens contained within a democratic unit, the less those citizens can directly participate in the decisions of government, and the more they must delegate this authority to others” (emphasis added). However, representation does have problems

In theoretical terms, the concept of representation assumes two purposes: that of isomorphism and that of equivalency, i.e. that the representative should have the same form as the represented, while not materially identical to them[...], or that the representative should have the same values as the represented, provided that a common standard that enables them to relate to each other (CHAUÍ, 2011, p.287).

However, if participation is to be indirect and representative, it is not possible to have effective participation, emancipation or clearly understood interest (the conditions shown above as necessary for Social Management). As much as there are leaders who listen to the represented and strive to represent them (by isomorphisms and equivalencies), it is not possible to express the will of every individual. Also, the bias of the representative’s own personal opinion must be considered.

Without doubt, the individual, when compared with the crowd, has less merit and less virtue [...] which is why, in most cases, the crowd is a better judge than an individual, whoever the individual may be. [...] The crowd has the extra advantage of being incorruptible. [...] When an individual allows himself/herself to be ruled by anger or any other passion, his/her judgement will be affected; but it is very difficult for everybody at the same time to allow them to be inflamed with anger and seduced by the mistake (ARISTÓTELES, 2005, p.101).

To solve the issue of participation of a large number of people, one can resort to the information and communication technologies that are so present in our daily lives. This issue has already been addressed in previous works, such as Rouillard (1999) on direct participation in democracy. In the field of Social Management the subject was already dealt with by Cançado (2013).

It is now possible to easily inform an extremely large number of people in real time. The internet has already become a widespread communications tool. To counter the argument that not everyone has access to this means of communication, reasonably simple and inexpensive solutions can be suggested to universalize access. Through the internet and other associated information technologies, people can share information, form debates, create their own opinions (emancipation) and directly participate. A recent example is Brazil in June 2013, where the population, through social networks such as Facebook and Whatsapp, organised demonstrations to put pressure on the state. In this case, an initial group protesting against an increase in bus fares began a series of demonstrations that then led to further protests about a wider range of grievances. It came as a surprise to the politicians, who were left not knowing how to respond. It may be that in the near future a candidate for executive office, or perhaps a political party, proposes a plan for participatory government along these lines or similar. However, this would involve giving up the discretionary outlook that the public administration still has. In any case, this is the suggestion.

Social control, then, when operated from a Social Management perspective, can change from indirect “supervisory bodies” to direct “co-management bodies” in the public administration. At first glance this may seem utopian, but taking into account the assumptions relating to the rights and duties of everyone to participate in the decision making and that everyone has the inherent ability to participate, it identifies the need for concrete proposals to guarantee these rights, enforce the duties and to offer the opportunity to everyone to acquire the ability to participate.

In short, citizens have the duty and the right (in that order) to participate in public management, even if not in all its scope, but at least in terms of strategy, thinking together of a project involving the country, state, territory, municipality or even a neighborhood. For this, real access to information must be guaranteed (in real time and in intelligible language). It is important to remember, as Tenório warns (2008a; 2008b), that society should be the protagonist in relation to the state, that is, there should be a society-state relationship (in that order), as the society should be the protagonist.

Another point to be made is that society cannot wait for “political will” of public administration to implement social control along the lines of Social Management. Social Management can come about through the state initially, but with public pressure on the government to acknowledge its importance (CANÇADO; TAVARES; DALLABRIDA, 2013). In the final section, the closing remarks will be presented.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

To close the discussion, it is important to make clear that this is just a propositional test, and not conclusive. New contributions are expected, as well as further reviews and collaborations. This first work was intended to discuss the limits of representation in social control, seeking support in Social Management as a way of providing a more objective proposal.

Social control in terms of Social Management can begin in small spaces, as a “school of participation”. Later, larger spaces can be used, as discussed in Cançado (2013). This change in

perspective in relation to public administration, which values “administering with” compared to “administering for”, is certainly a long process, but one that has already begun.

Social control should not be seen as a demand of the population, but rather as both a duty and a right. For this to take effect the population cannot hide behind “leaders”, as, however well intentioned they may be, this still leads to a division of the population between “leaders” and “followers”, a situation completely contradictory to emancipation and, therefore, Social Management. Emancipation is not easy, as it implies leaving one’s comfort zone, but at the same time it is a duty and a right of every citizen who cares about the common good, or, in the words of Tenório, the “res publica”.

The fragility of the social development process can be attributed to the lack of competence of the managers to make them advance, and to promote effective changes on one side and another, the overwhelming role of charismatic leaders that create dependency in the communities and put the continuity of projects at risk (FISCHER, 2002, p.27).

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