

**SOCIAL MANAGEMENT AND THE USE OF ICTS: Social participation in the
formulation of public policies**

**GESTÃO SOCIAL E O USO DE TICS: Participação social na formulação de políticas
públicas**

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ABSTRACT: Social Management is a science field that seeks to reconfigure the relations between society, state and market, in opposition to Strategic Management in order to promote an administration that ensures people's interests prevail. Thus, considering public policies as, in a way, a set of solutions for public issues, and that for them to be adequate it is necessary that they are formulated in a democratic way by means of wide social participation. Recently, internet has been able to change politics for it provides a way to make interaction and participation more accessible. Even though the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) alone is not enough to ensure participation, it is a way to make it easier. With the advent of internet and social media, it is possible to shorten the distances allowing people to share their opinions and ideas almost immediately without leaving their homes. This work aims to briefly discuss and analyze the possibilities concerning Social Management and the use of ICTs in order to broaden social participation on public policies formulation.

Keywords: Social Management; ICTs; Participation; Public Policies.

RESUMO: Gestão Social é um campo da ciência que busca reconfigurar as relações entre sociedade, Estado e mercado, em oposição à gestão estratégica de forma a promover uma administração que assegure a prevalência do interesse das pessoas. Desta forma, considerando políticas públicas, de certo modo, como um conjunto de soluções para problemas públicos, e que, para que sejam apropriados é necessário que sejam formulados de uma forma democrática por meio de ampla participação social. Recentemente, a internet tem sido capaz de mudar as políticas pois permite uma forma de participação e interação mais acessível. Apesar do uso das Tecnologias da Informação e Comunicação (TICs) em si não ser o suficiente para assegurar a participação, é uma forma de torná-la mais fácil e possível. Com o advento da internet e das redes sociais, é possível encurtar distancias permitindo que as pessoas possam compartilhar suas opiniões e ideias de forma quase imediata sem deixarem seus lares. Este trabalho busca discutir e analisar as possibilidades em relação à Gestão Social por meio do uso de TICs como forma de ampliar a participação social na formulação de políticas públicas.

Palavras-Chave: Gestão Social; TICs; Participação; Políticas Públicas.

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INTRODUCTION

Social Management is a growing field belonging to the applied social sciences area, since 1990 to today the number of studies centers, laboratories, post-graduation courses and scientific journals have only been growing. It consists, additionally, of a theory that seeks to increase social participation, and as such, to ensure people's expectations to be answered, to make the social prevail over the state and the market. In other words, to favor collective over individuality and as thus to improve our democracy.

On liberal democracies government is performed by means of politics which recognize the freedoms and limits of citizens on the social action field. Thus, Public Policies are a set of bidimensional governmental actions that seeks to achieve public interest goals in a way that social acceptance and expected results are attained (AGUILAR, 2012). Further on, according to Parada (2007), democracy must ensure people to present themselves publicly in a way to ensure society can debate about itself, by means of discussion enabling transformation, and in this would reside the true wealth of a given Society. A good public policy origin itself in action courses and information determined by the participation of private sector and community in a democratic way. (PARADA, 2007).

For democracy to be true it is needed participation and debate and new technologies can democratize the public sphere, allowing citizens to deliberate among themselves and with government. Digital democracy, the use of ICTs for participation and public decision-making processes, is capable of engaging new groups of people, empowering citizens and establishing new relationships between society and governments. New technology can make democracy more representative by allowing people more participation and also improving its own legitimacy by enabling such freedom (SIMON, 2017).

Further on, in 2015, Cançado et al. (2015), established a research schedule in order to ensure that Social Management, as a science field in progress, develops more theoretical and methodological tools for its consolidation on applied social sciences in frame 6.2 – present on Cançado et al.(2015) - entitled synthesis of the research schedule proposed, one of the goals is to identify possibilities of using ICTs for direct participation on the field of Social Management, in which this work is included.

2. GOALS

- Analyze and discuss how ICTs can be used as a tool to contribute to Social Management, ensuring and widening democratic participation.
- Discuss how ICTs tools can encourage and broaden people's participation on public policies formulation and decision-making processes.

3. SOCIAL MANAGEMENT

Carrion (2007), describes Social Management as a search for new ways for the problem of social exclusion provoked by neo-liberalism. As such, it is not a simple matter as transposing the principles from business management to social field. Social Management seeks a local integrated development as well as financial and economical sustainability whenever possible. Towards achieving this proposal, it is a theory that recognizes the conflicts of interest between society, the State and the market (CARRION, 2007).

Fischer (2007) affirms that, if management is understood as a function and not a tool, and as such it seeks to make society fairer, the distinction of organizations belong to the market, state or third sector spheres becomes irrelevant as all of them should be guided by the social aspect. Therefore, that is what must be admitted for understanding Social Management concept, here defined as a relational act capable of guiding and regulating processes by means of broad mobilization of actors on the communicative act resulting in intra and interorganizational partnerships. As such, decentralized and participative structures that seeks a good collective planned, viable, and sustainable (FISCHER, 2007).

Justen (2016) defines Social Management as an antithetic conception in relation to strategic management, which is based on collective decision-making, dialogicity, language intelligibility, as a transparent process aiming emancipation, and thus agrees with the definition of Cançado *et al.* (2015a), which is going to be further discussed ahead. Justen agrees with Cançado *et al.* when stating that Social Management has as its final goal the Emancipation, for him following Freire's (1979 apud Justen, 2016) idea of dialogical pedagogy (JUSTEN, 2016).

Professor Tenório (1998), and other group of researchers such as Cançado *et al.* (2015), have been trying to improve and delimitate the concept in order to fully establish Social Management as an applied social science area. The conception adopted and applied to this work is the one used, and created, by Cançado *et al.* (2015). These authors also consider that the term risk being trivialized and suffers from being confused with others such as politics management of social programs. However, it has been gaining recognition and visibility in both academic and media environments. To avoid this confusion, the authors seek to better outline the concept. For them, Social Management is composed of some basic characteristics: Collective decision-making, free from coercion, transparency, emancipations, anti-positivism and volunteerism (CANÇADO *et al.*, 2015).

Later, the author gathers characteristics, which other authors associated to Social Management, being them: Deliberative democracy, dialogicity, emancipation, public sphere, self-interest properly understood, inter-subjectivity, rationality, solidarity and sustainability. Cançado *et al.* then, defines Social Management as:

In an effort of synthesis, we can define Social Management as: a dialectical process of the own social organization in the public sphere, founded in the self-interest properly understood and that has as a goal the emancipation of men (CANÇADO *et al.*, 2015, p. 178).¹

In Social Management, first it is necessary to invert the logic behind the pair of words State-Society and Capital-Labor to Society-State and Labor-Capital. The protagonist on such relations ought to be citizenship and not the State or the market themselves. (TENÓRIO, 1998). Following this logic, the state management, the techno-bureaucracy becomes anti-democratic, the participation of the worker class in the decisions of the enterprise-system is not encouraged and so the exercise of citizenship on the enterprise management and on the public policies processes is not valued. Thus, for Social Management to be considered as effective, the government's public policies formulations should not consider the people as a target, client or goal but as an active participant, that is when citizenship is truly respected (TENÓRIO, 1998).

The self-interest properly understood can be seen as a starting point for Social Management, as mentioned before it shelters two important aspects to be achieved which is solidarity and sustainability. This notion comes from Tocqueville, whereas it is understood that the collective wellbeing is a condition for individual wellbeing. Additionally, it can only happen in a democratic context, which is reinforced by Social Management. Further on, self-interest properly understood allows individuals to perceive the dynamics of their own agency on the building of the public sphere. Here, public sphere is where Social Management is built, it can be considered as an intermediate category on the process of Social Management for it is the place and essential condition for its development (CANÇADO, 2013; MENDONÇA *et al.*, 2012).

This concept, public sphere, is the aspect of social life in which public opinion is formed, it is a proper network for communication of contents, positionings and formation of opinions which are condensed and becomes public opinions on specific themes. It is there that society, the State and the market interacts dialogically (PERES JÚNIOR *et al.*, 2013).

Social Management, therefore, seeks to build a new public sphere in which the population is brought closer to politics, for it is a needed subjective space where it can be possible for people to deliberate about their needs and future. Social Management develops itself as individual emancipation is made possible when the bourgeois public sphere is substituted by this new subjective space containing the theoretical categories: Deliberative Democracy, Dialogicity, Intersubjectivity and Rationality (CANÇADO *et al.*, 2015)

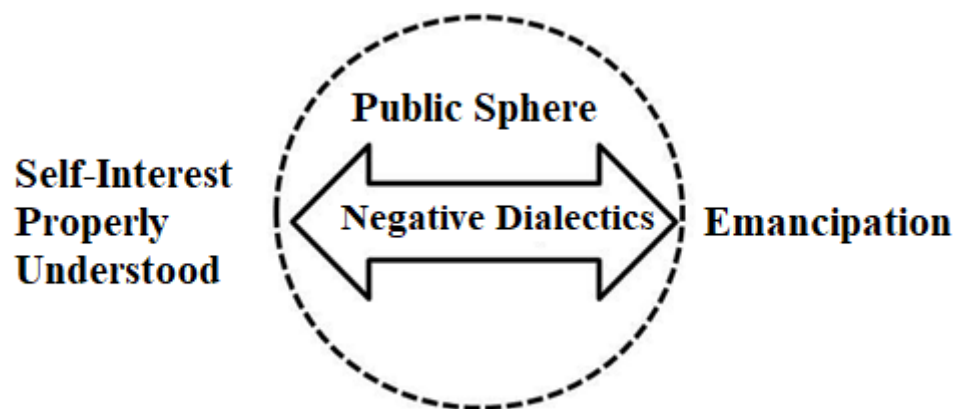
Other key concept in Social Management is participation, for it seeks a more participative, and dialogical management, in which the decisions are collective. According to Paula (2005), the societal public administration, inserted on the perspective of Social Management, manifest itself in alternative experiences such as Management Councils and Participative Budgeting (TENÓRIO, 1998; PAULA, 2005).

¹ Translated by the Authors

Participation and citizenship are, here, understood as the appropriation by individuals of the right to democratically build their own destiny. In Brazil, since 1960s, the social movements seek to develop social participation and to rethink Brazilian development through the optics of a new State management which ensures public participation in the institutions generation management experiences focused on the real demands of the people. Thus, Social Management is a societal alternative to substitute the technical and bureaucratic management in order to ensure participation by means of a decision-making process involving multiple social subjects (TENÓRIO, 2005; PAULA, 2005,).

All these concepts come together to compose Social Management and can be, following the Negative Dialectics logic (ADORNO, 2003), redesigned as many times it needs, for here there is not an intention of synthesis, only thesis and antitheses, therefore there is a permanent effort for evolution and change of this theory. Considering the Negative Dialectics theory, the concept is only a moment, and as thus, here Social Management starts as an opposition to strategic management, however, Cançado *et al.*(2015) draft a proper concept in order to avoid labeling everything that is not strategic management as Social Management creating a concept which is also perceived as a non-concept. Picture 2 illustrates this relation (CANÇADO, 2013; CANÇADO *et al.*, 2015):

Picture 3 – Social Management Main Theoretical Categories



Source: adapted from Cançado *et al.* (2013).

4. PUBLIC POLICIES, ICTS, AND PARTICIPATION

Since 1940, with Lasswell definition of a social science applied as a mediator between academic, decision makers and citizens, name as *policy sciences*, public policies is a multidisciplinary area that has been growing over the years. In Brazil, its growth and consolidation are given during the 2000s, strengthening discussions concerning the federalism and society's participation o public management. Recently, studies regarding participation and deliberation have been growing in a movement that straighten the society and institutional fields (MENICUCCI, 2018).

Public policies can be defined as finding specific solutions for managing public issues, and as such, this concept includes both government and State themes (PARADA, 2007). Further on, according to Aguilar (2012), they are a group of intentional and casual actions, defined by interlocution between government and society, decided by public authorities and performed by government actors (AGUILAR, 2012).

Additionally, Capella (2018) states that the production of public policies seeks to define these problems from the perception of actors on the public issues and interests at stake. DAS GRAÇAS RUA (1997) also highlights the importance of social actors, as the ones that makes demands to governments, which try to answer by means of political activities. Further on, Canto Sáenz (2000) on open, plural and democratic societies, the implementation and elaboration of public policies should be performed by direct participation of citizens through a bottom up approach (CANTO SÁENZ, 2000).

Participation, according to Parada (2007) is a privileged way that citizens and organizations can value their opinions, empowering them and it also ensures more transparency to the political system and highlights the most important social problems. Information technologies makes it easier for a meaningful interaction enabling the occupation of spaces which are naturally difficult to reach within authoritarian backgrounds (PARADA, 2007).

The use of ICTs on public administration started on the 60s, however, these technologies were uses in a restrictive manner, in general, regarding routine activities, like payroll and accounting. Since then, ICTs have been growing and being more used each day since 1990s on public institutions for different reasons: For increasing transparency, accountability, efficiency, anti-corruption combat and to promote new forms of public engagement. With the use of ICTs people can monitor government action when data is available. (AE CHUN et al., 2012; CARLO BERTOT et al., 2012; TOMKOVA, 2009).

Thus, if used correctly, ICTs can increase transparency and reduce corruption by enhancing the relationships between government and the people. The use of these technologies on e-government initiatives can disseminate information, even on authoritarian regimes, which use ICTs to manipulate information, uncontrolled flow of information can reach the population, causing oppositional actions, and become a threat. Information is considered an important ally for the citizen, the citizens participation is a right acquired after the dictatorship in Brazil, such right is a guarantee from the Federal constitution of 1988 present on the 5th article (BERTOT et al., 2010; ÅSTRÖM, 2012; HHARRISON; SAYOGO, 2014; DE CARVALHO et al, 2019).

Further on, public administration has been challenged to reinvent its strategies in face of the recent advances, new technological paradigms and economical and social transformations, which reveal new information and communication technologies as important allies (DE CARVALHO et al, 2019). Further on, with these 'new' set of tools, it was made possible the creation of a new participatory experience by using electronic means that can be called e-Participation. This participation can take different forms, from forwarding political messages through e-mail and social networks to E-consultations and online petitions. (PANOPOULOU et al., 2009; MARTIN, 2014; TOMKOVA, 2009). Initiatives from the government where people collaboration is desired by means of using ICTs can be defined as e-

government, which is when these two groups work together to achieve a common goal. This participation would enable marginalized individuals and groups to be heard, to participate in decision-making processes. As such, public institutions have been encouraging the use of ICTs to promote citizen engagement, as well as to meet a new agenda requiring transparency, openness, and legitimacy (SOON AE CHUN *et al.*, 2012; MILAKOVICH, 2010; PANAGIOTOPOULOS, 2012).

5. METHODOLOGY

Social sciences frequently work with meanings, motivations, values and beliefs and these should not be reduced to only quantitative data (BONI; QUARESMA, 2005). Qualitative approaches can be used to properly understand the nature of a social phenomenon, aiming at complex or specific situations. According to Flick (2009) this type of research aims to understand, describe, and sometimes explain these phenomena from inside in different perspectives. It seeks to get access to experience, interactions and documents within its natural context as to bring forth particularities of the studied material, always taking into consideration that the researcher is an important part of the process (RICHARDSON, 2012; FLICK, 2009).

Following this perspective, articles regarding Public Policies and ICTS were surveyed using *Periódicos Capes* platform, considering a time period of ten years from the present and relevance to the area and accessibility, it was also used a previous survey on Social Management and ICTs from MARINHO (2019) master's dissertation and articles and books concerning Public Policies previously researched by one of the authors. From the reading and analysis of these works relevant discussion and conclusions, regarding the goals, were reached and presented on this paper.

Therefore, this work aims to comprehend the possibilities and challenges of the ICTs on the perspective of social participation in the construction of public policies by means of a literature review proposed here.

On the survey on *Portal de Periódicos CAPES* the key-words Public Policies Formulation, *Formulação de Políticas Públicas*, ICTs and Participation, TICs and *Participação*, Social Participation and Digital Governance, *Participação Social* and *Governança*. The criteria for inclusion on this research was to verify if the articles contained relevant discussion on the definition of the key-words Public Policy Formulation, ICTs and Social Management.

6. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Within democratic contexts, participation whether local, state or on national level, is essential for consolidating what is supposed to be a true participatory democracy. Public participation enables citizens to be included on the deliberations and decision-making

processes, expressing societies' true needs and issues, and as such empowering them (MILAKOVICH, 2010; PANOPOULOU, 2009). Therefore, ensuring that everyone has access to the digital word is a necessary condition, although not sufficient, for grating conditions in a way that in a near future, on different participation levels, there will be a 'population which is connected and accessible to digital captures (RODRIGUES, 2019).

Further on, transparency and accountability are needed as to strengthen this empowerment, it is necessary that information is available so that citizens can assess and validate the actions of the government. Popular engagement is a pivotal pillar for a good governance (HARRISON, 2014). Citizens ought to take part on all these processes and not only be asked sporadically what they think. They must be able to participate on the decision-making process and to follow the government's actions and its outcomes. E-participation is essential in this process as it allows citizens' engagement in policy-making processes, legitimating the ideas and decisions (BABEIYA; MASABO, 2017).

Moreover, when talking about participation one should consider on what degree of it is the individual or group. The levels of participation go from informing to empowerment. According to the International Association of Public Participation, it starts with 'inform' at the bottom, which consists of only supplying people with information, then 'consult' which seeks to gather peoples' feedback. Further on there is 'involve' where government and people work together. 'Collaboration' comes in sequence, where it is also a partnership between people and government however in this case citizens are also involved in decision-making processes. Finally, the last one is 'empowerment' where citizens are the ones who makes the decisions for the government to implement (EFFING *et al.*, 2011; MCNUTT, 2014).

Democracy itself is benefited from participation of different actors on the decision-making processes by means of these new digital channels. Therefore, social participation can be broadened making participation progressively more deliberative. On this perspective, it can be said there is a new form of cooperation and communication that can be called cyberdemocracy (DE CARVALHO *et al.*, 2019).

Further on, according to Macintosh (2004, APUD BABEIYA; MASABO, 2017), regarding e-participation there also different degrees to be considered. The first level would be e-enabling, which consists of allowing people who traditionally do not use internet for accessing information to do it moving towards e-engaging level, which enables consultation and deeper interaction and contribution for deliberative debates on policy issues (BABEIYA; MASABO, 2017).

According to Tomkova (2009) there are five most common types of e-consultations. The first is 'question and answer discussion forums' on government websites where people can post questions and receive feedback. Further on there are the 'on-line polls' which consists of quick questions and answers created to check people's opinion on public matters. 'E-petitions' enables citizens to make requests directly to the government by collecting online signature. Moreover, there are the 'e-panels' which consists of a kind of on-line consultation where the individuals that participate are invited, representing a sample of a given group, to discuss online

or vote on a certain topic or initiative. The last one is ‘editorial’ consultations, here representatives of society and of third sector are invited to comment as to reach a consensus based on a given public policy document (TOMKOVA, 2009).

Moreover, there are other possible ways of online engagement. Crowdsourcing consists of allowing large quantities of input from citizens to be obtained, all of this done mainly through web technologies. The problem is exposed to the public and they oversee solving the issue with a solution, this method reaches a large and diverse public (CHARALABIDIS, 2014; MCNUTT, 2014). Furthermore, there are also other options such as co-production, social voting, wikis and social networking, which is the use of social media to engage people into social activity. These have been increasing and are becoming more popular, people prefer to discuss and collaborate through these new online tools such as: wikis, Facebook, Twitter or similar (MCNUTT, 2014).

Some of these Web 2.0 technologies, specially social media networks which, according to Bertot *et al.*(2010), can be both the tools and technologies that enables it as to the content generated by them, it can include blogs, wikis, social networking sites, micro-blogging and multimedia sharing services and are often used for crowdsourcing, for social media is often collaborative and participatory in its essence, enabling users to socialize and share information, also allowing for empowerment as it enables people to express themselves, and even broadcast freely, potentializing, also, a direct connection between citizen and government actors in real time (BERTOT *et al.*, 2010; LUCIANO *et al.*, 2018).

Social Media presents content created directly by the public, and mainly not by professionals, and as such, it has a good protentional for e-participation. With the advent of mobile devices and thus, mobile internet, the power of Social Media increased making governments and organizations struggle in attempt to deal with this phenomenon (MAGRO, 2012; CARLO BERTOT *et al.*, 2012; EFFING *et al.*, 2011).

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION.

With the development of the ICTs, it became possible to engage citizens in a new kind of participation, which can be called e-participation, consisting on people’s participation on electronic means, which enables more transparency and accountability on governments actions. However, it ought to be thought the different types of e-participation, considering that there are many tools available (ÅSTRÖM, 2012).

Thus, with the arising of internet and these tools mentioned above, it is possible to create more opportunities which would allow citizens to become more empowered, however it is needed to change the perspective of citizens as mere clients of public policies and services to become producers. Social media is a powerful tool which allows public institutions to engage citizens, even though there are many challenges still to overcome (EFFING, 2011; MCNUTT, 2014).

Further on, the public sector as well as the organizations have been embracing more social media to better engage people, be more transparent and accountable by disseminating

useful information and encouraging mass collaboration. Most opportunities for participation, like crowdsourcing and coproduction can be attained within social media, or sometimes even by using intranet to communicate with employees (ZAVATTARO, 2013; KHAN *et al.*, 2014).

From the results of this work, it is possible to notice how more democratic participatory experiences are possible. Thus, by identifying Social Management aspects within such tools it can also be appointed that it is not a utopia as some authors have claimed in the past. Further on, it can be perceived the importance of the ICTs on governmental contexts and how its use should be increased and encouraged, given there also measures taken to lessen the problems concerning the use of ICTs.

Further on, ICTs can also be used to strengthen civic education by means of guaranteeing equal access to information and involvement of individuals in networks which enables a more effective citizen participation. Thus, it can be said that direct participation also has an educative aspect as it brings society closer to the political life of the nation (DE CARVALHO *et al*, 2019). There is no perfect method for sure, however Social Management combined with ICTs allows for more equal participation and therefore it can bring people closer to their collective goals.

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