SOCIAL SCIENCES

Public space, socio-environmental responsibility and citizenship: a case study on a Brazilian borough

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Abstract: Some researchers point out the decline in contemporary cities of the use of public spaces, whether free or restricted access. In this sense, the present essay proposes a reflection on a "public sphere of organized presence", according to Habermas classification, as a rescue of the importance of this space for the exercise of citizenship and social-environmental responsibility. The reflection was based on the results obtained from a study in the district of Riacho Grande, São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo, Brazil, in which the environmental perception of the participants of the meetings about the region was known by documentary analysis, direct observation and interviews with questionnaires. It was possible to verify that this public space can facilitate a greater integration between the public administrators and citizens, helping even in the defense to the environment.

Key words: Brazil, citizenship, public space, sphere public.

INTRODUCTION

The idea that the social space was divided into two domains, the public (polis) and the private one (oikos), is not recent, in ancient Greece that difference was established, and it was in the polis of that period that they settled the first debates, culminating in the first consensuses and decisions regarding the destiny of the citizens and of the motherland. However, throughout history, societies and consequently cities have undergone transformations in their processes of expansion and organization, taking what was so established to an uncomfortable liquidity (Baumann 2001). And in this way, new scenarios arise in the public opinion dimensions of civil society and with them, the idea of "public" is gaining assorted meaning.

Despite of many works on the subject, it is generally agreed that some thinkers, including Hannah Arendt, Richard Sennett and Jürgen Habermas, have established themselves as a reference in political philosophy, sociology, and history on the subject. In the present work, it was decided to adopt Habermas' thought as a basis for reflections, although, according to some researchers, the concept of "public sphere" in the form defined by Habermas must be contextualized and cannot be applied to all countries (Bulut 2014).

In Habermas's (1984) perspective, the French constitution of 1791, adopting the Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen in 1789, begins to define the outlines of what would be the public sphere in paragraph 11, which describes free communication of ideas and opinions as one of the most valuable rights of human being and

that gave man the freedom to speak, write and express freely, as long as he was responsible for the misuse of these means. The latter constitution of 1793 also added the right to freely assemble and express their opinions, even by the press or other method of expression. However, these proclaimed rights did not really belong to the constitutional reality, though, the article came into effect, the freedom of the press was deported in the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte after the Coup d'état (Habermas 1984).

However, it was not only freedom of expression that was allowed for a few ones. Regarding to educational background, which is now also the basic right of the citizen, in the French Revolution it was a grade to distinguish active and passive citizens in the public political sphere, since this was a consequence of a social status, won by titles of property (Habermas 1984). By analyzing these facts, it is no wonder that the rights and status of citizens have undergone many changes, after severe repressions and inequalities related to ethnicity, sex, social class, among others, consequently becoming a very discussed subject since then.

Habermas (1995) defined the status of citizens in two conceptions: liberal and republican. In the liberal conception, the status of citizens is defined by the subjective rights they have vis-à-vis the state and other citizens. In this concept citizens experience the protection of the state to the extent that they strive for their private interests within the limits established by the laws and also gives them the possibility to make their private interests prevail by allowing those interests to be added (through elections and the composition of parliament and government) with other private interests until a political will is formed capable of exerting an effective influence on the administration. "In this way, citizens in their role as members of political life, can control to what extent the power of the state is implemented in their own interests as private people" (Habermas 1995, p. 41).

In the republican conception, citizen status relates to citizenship, those with citizen status have rights of participation and political communication. Not being guaranteed the freedom of external constraints, but rather the participation in a common practice, the exercise of which enables citizens to become responsible political actors of a community of free and equal persons. The existence of the State is not in the protection of subjective, private or equal rights, but in ensuring an inclusive process of forming opinion and political will, in which citizens understand what ends and standards correspond to the common interest of all. "In this way, Republican citizens are expected much more than merely to be guided by their private interests" (Habermas 1995, p. 41).

In the perspective of Habermas (1997), it was possible to secure and expand the status of citizens in Western societies in the last centuries, after the expansion of their rights, through which liberal defense rights protect the subject against illegal state interference, as well as rights of participation and social participation. Habermas also adds that "other social movements, especially immigration and wars, have stimulated the expansion of citizen status in different dimensions" (Habermas 1997, p. 108).

But, where could citizens exercise their citizenship? In this sense, Losekann (2009) describes that Habermas revisited his original ideas of the public sphere, adjusted and added new thoughts defining three types of partial public spheres: the episodic public sphere, the public sphere of organized presence and the abstract public sphere. Being the first that occurs in bars, cafes, in the squares, streets, among other public spaces. The second occurs in meetings organized in party meetings,

parents', neighbors', church, among others. The latter is the one produced by the media, they are readers, spectators, listeners, being spatially distant, but reunited in similar thoughts. Yet according to Losekann (2009) for Habermas, "these different levels of public spheres are always influencing each other, overlapping and connecting in such a way that these partial spheres always cause an expansion of what is produced in the public sphere" (Losekann 2009, p .51). In this perspective, this essay presents an example of citizenship that occurs in the space of public sphere of organized public presence, in this case, the space of the Riacho Grande subprefecture[1] in the city of São Bernardo do Campo/SP, as the meetings were organized by fixed place, date and time, convoked by the institutionalized public power.

The Brazilian subprefectures were created by the understanding that it is important to institutionalize mechanisms that democratize the public management of the municipalities and strengthen the participating forms that exist in the regional level. This "decentralization" is a way of facilitating the provision of public services to citizens, whether or not combined with participation. When there is participation, this is usually conceived as the expansion of spaces so that society can focus on the definition of public policies (Grin 2015). In Grin's view (2015) the subprefectures tried to set democracy and public policy closer to regional realities by stimulating mechanisms of social control, such as the elaboration of Regional Director Plans. The Municipal Executive Power is exercised by the mayor, but the deputy-mayor responds administratively and politically by the District, meeting the demands, requests and suggestions of the population (PMSBC 2016). As

the role of the subprefecture is to ensure and care about different areas such as education, economy, housing, road system, drainage network, urban cleaning, health, safety, culture and leisure of the region on its responsibility, the scale of demands is great to this type of public space. Whereas Riacho Grande subprefecture is a fundamental place for the communication about the socio-environmental problems and necessary changes in a region that constitutes an important area of source.

Within this perspective, the objective of this essay is to reflect on the "public sphere of organized presence", according to Habermas classification, as a rescue of the importance of the space for the exercise of citizenship and social and environmental responsibility, based on the results obtained in a study of the subprefecture of Riacho Grande in São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo, Brazil, in which, through the direct observation and application of questionnaires, it was documented the environmental perception of the meeting participants concerning the district.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This work is a cut of a master's project from the Postgraduate Program in Integrated Environmental Analysis of the Federal University of São Paulo, which proposes the challenge of integrating different areas of knowledge, resulting in the exercise of interdisciplinarity and the understanding of complexity involved in social and environmental issues. From this perspective, the proposal had a qualitative character in the form of a case study, understood here as an *"empirical research that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context*

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1 Administrative districts, asking to boroughs, previously known as regional administrations (Wampler 2007).

are not clearly evident" (Yin 2015). Also, direct observation or non-participant observation was used, as reflected by Bogdan & Biklen (1994) and Belei et al. (2008).

Site selection

The District of Riacho Grande belongs to the municipality of São Bernardo do Campo (São Paulo Brazil) and is called district because it is a municipal subdivision, which is administered by a deputy-mayor. Riacho Grande has an area of 10.69 km² of urban area and 214.42 km² of rural area (PMSBC 2016). More than half of its territory belongs to the watershed protection area - APM.

The district has the presence of great biodiversity, being considered by the Ministry of the Environment (2007), an area with high priority for conservation. For the region of springs and the presence of great biodiversity, Riacho Grande is protected by the State Law nº 1,172 of November 17, 1976.

However, due to the anthropic action this ecosystem is constantly undergoing change. The disposal of commercial and household waste directly into the reservoir and the process of deforestation of native vegetation from irregular occupations are the main forms of environmental degradation in the district (Begalli 2013 & Duran et al. 2006).

Because of the impoundment in the 1930s, road access was restricted, transforming the region into a series of peninsulas. All the roads have points without exits, except for the road of "Rio Acima", which access, in the dammed points happened to be done by means of rafts (Loteamentos 1984).

The presence of the ferries makes it difficult for residents of neighboring towns to travel to the region due to the lack of public transport infrastructure and the delay in their crossing. On the other hand, this difficulty delays the intense occupation of the region, preserving it.

The district has native forests still preserved, dispersed occupation and predominantly agricultural activities. However, the sources are rarely free of contamination, even in places with little or no human presence (Gasparini 2001).

To take the demands related to the delay in the crossing of the ferry, public transportation, the lack of solid waste collection trucks that cannot reach the villages, among other problems related to the access road the residents seek the subprefecture. To facilitate the exposure of demands and wishes of the population to the deputy-mayor, monthly meetings were held until 2016 with representatives of neighborhood in the space of the subprefecture. This space was an important resource so that the deputy-mayor could, in addition to listening to the community, seek and discuss solutions to the problems and also inform about the district.

Although the fact that the deputy-mayor listens to the community and keeps them informed does not mean citizenship, since it requires a critical analysis of the information (Toschi 2002), the meetings received neighborhood leaders who brought the demands of a group, representing not only their own demands, but of several people and this action fits into the concept of citizenship, because according to Sato (2003) citizenship involves actions both of the subject itself, and in the mobilization of this individual to involve more people to also take actions that promote solutions to existing problems in the relation between person and environment or in the prevention of environmental problems.

Concerning the fact that the space of the meetings of the subprefecture constitutes a dialogical public sphere of organized presence, according to Habermasian public sphere and the district to be characterized as an area with high priority for conservation, this place was chosen

to reflect on public space, socioenvironmental responsibility and citizenship.

Steps and procedures

After choosing the site of study, the stages of the work were divided into: a) exploratory phase - field visits, information collection, consultation on historical sources available in the Memory Service and the São Bernardo do Campo Collection; b) technical and ethical procedures; c) data collection - elaboration, test and application of questionnaire; d) participation in meetings and field diary; e) tabulation, analysis and interpretation of data.

During the exploratory period of the research, visits were made to the district and the Riacho Grande subprefecture. During the visits, it was observed how was the routine of the meetings of the subprefecture and the main problems visible in the district. At this stage, the existence of houses along the banks of the reservoir, the presence of solid waste in areas adjacent to the subprefecture, the transit of vehicles for the crossing of the ferry, among other information were noted. Documentary analysis was also carried out in historical archives of the city of São Bernardo do Campo, through documents available in the memorial collection of the city, with the objective of obtaining knowledge about the historical process of change and social and environmental impact in the region. The objective of the exploratory stage was to know the area of study to elaborate specific questions of the questionnaire, for example, the question of the future replacement of the João Basso ferry by a bridge, which had already raised complaints since the construction.

After approval of the research by the Ethics Committee of the University, as well as formal request to the deputy-mayor for participation and annotation of the information in the meetings of the subprefecture, a presentation

of the project was held in the first meeting of the year in 2015, explaining the importance and justification of the job. Meeting attendees were requested to participate in the collection of questionnaires at subsequent meetings. Before the interviews with the application of questionnaires, the participants filled out the Informed Consent Form.

The data collection stage was carried out through the application of questionnaires and field diary notes, obtained through direct observation during the meetings of the subprefecture, documentary analysis, collection of historical archives in the memorial collection of São Bernardo do Campo from of data printed in newspapers and the use of statistical data provided by the municipality.

The questionnaire was composed of structured and semi-structured questions whose objective was to obtain data on: 1) socio-demographic characterization of the place; 2) environmental perception of the participants, which according to Tassara & Rabinovich (2003) is directly related to the experiences of the subject that help him to constitute his own identity from cultural interpretations and build narratives of himself, what characterizes perception environmental as a psychosocial phenomenon, which is also influenced by the environment and sense organs. Environmental perception, in turn, is related to social representations, that "approach a form of knowledge, socially elaborated and shared, that contains a practical objective and contributes to the construction of a common reality to a social set" (Jodelet 2001 p. 22). Finally, it was also aimed at ascertaining the level of satisfaction in various aspects of the region; and indicatives about citizenship in the public space of the subprefecture, as well as the frequency and reason why the residents participated in the meeting. The results obtained were pointed out in relation to the questions

that aimed to evaluate the perception and environmental representation of the participants and the indicatives about the use of a restricted public space for the exercise of citizenship and how these interrelations could contribute to the treatment of socio-environmental issues in the study region.

During the participation in the subprefecture meetings there were noted observations and reports of the attendants of the subprefecture, at that moment each representative of neighborhood or resident manifested his demands. The annotations were taken in a notebook meant for this purpose. According to Lima et al. (2007) there are two types of notes took in the field diary: the descriptive annotation and the reflective analytic annotation. In the first, it aims to accurately convey the exposure of phenomena and is the first step to advance in the explanation and understanding of this phenomenon. The second is analytic-reflexive and comes from the observation of events and processes, seeking meanings and explanations of the phenomena seized.

The main annotation was the descriptive one, due to the fact that it was essential to write more precisely the speech of the participants. It was also worth noting that some observations were made about the structure of the meetings and experiences lived by some residents. This material was used for reflection and another complementary look on the data collected and for enriching the results and discussion.

Characterization of participants

The visits for data collection were carried out between September and November 2015, totaling the application of 48 questionnaires. The number was based on the average attendees of the meetings, raised by the frequency book made available for signature, because in this subprefecture, although individual demands could be taken, the residents were usually represented by neighborhood leaders.

The study included young people aged 18 and older, men and women, residents of the municipality who attended the meetings of the subprefecture. Most of the participants were female, 29 women (60%) and 19 men (40%). The age group of the participants presented a significant number of participants from 51 years (50%), then the range from 31 to 50 years old with (42%) and the range from 20 to 30 years old with the lowest percentage.

The salary concentration range was between 1 and 4 minimum wages - considering the amount of 788 BRL (248 USD[2]) the minimum wage in the year 2015. In the case of economic activity, of the 48 participants 11 were retired. Since different economic activities have been reported, such as: teacher, merchant, administrative assistant, craftsman, lawyer, receptionist, public servant, musician, and some respondents indicate that they are home owners (a term used in Brazil to describe the principal responsible for taking care of the home and / or child). Most of the participants (58%) were employed at the time of the survey and for this reason the meetings were always at night time. According to the deputy-mayor, meetings always began at 7:00 p.m. and ended at 9:00 p.m., to meet the majority, including those who work during business hours.

RESULTS

Participation in meetings

Regarding the research individuals who declared themselves to be neighborhood leaders, the majority (78%) participated assiduously in meetings in the subprefecture. According to the observations collected, these neighborhood

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2 Considering the US dollar exchange rate of 3.18 BRL in 2015.

leaders communicated with the other residents of the district to discuss the problems of the region that should be brought to the meetings in the subprefecture.

The meetings were held on the last Monday of each month, with the subprefecture receiving, before the beginning of the meeting, the leaders of the neighborhood who had emergency demands. Since the deputy-mayor also opened the space for the participants to share the demands of their neighborhoods, he used to share the news of the region with the visitors, as well as the date of the participatory budget meetings of the city (which in Brazil is a governmental mechanism participatory democracy that allows citizens to influence or decide on public budgets), among other meetings of importance to the district. All the demands were shared in public by all the attendants of the subprefecture. The meeting participant went ahead of everyone and reported on all their demands. The deputy-mayor requested that the secretary of the subprefecture register all the requests, which also gave the opinion regarding the term or action that would probably be carried out on the problem. As soon as the villager finished reporting his demands, he was on his way back to his place and a new participant went to the plenary to report the requests of his neighborhood.

There were several reasons why the residents responded to attend the meetings of the subprefecture, according to the following categories, which were listed in descending order of citation: a) To update itself, cited 11 times; b) take demands, quoted 11 times; c) because it was important to participate, quoted five times; d) talk about neighborhood problems, quoted four times; e) payment of bills, quoted three times; f) doubts, quoted twice; g) look at housing, quoted twice; h) on-site work, quoted twice. The reasons that were cited only once were: street naming,

having space for social participation, projects, knowing my rights, because I am part of the leadership of the neighborhood.

Finally, when asked to answer what could be done to solve the problems of the region, the residents mentioned the importance of participation in the meetings of the subprefecture, the duty to contribute to the environment, the union of the residents and the collection of public power for the realization of the requests, besides the appropriate behavioral charge of the tourists and among others.

Perceptions and representations

Based on the understanding that the individual, in addition to being an active part of the environment, also seeks to interpret it, based on their perceptions, creating representations and sharing them, and adopted the integrated presentation regarding the results obtained for the investigation of perception and social representation regarding the environment surrounding the subprefecture and possible interrelationships that can be established with this space as a possible public sphere of the presence organized to exercise citizenship and the resolution of socio-environmental issues in the region.

According to Abric (1993), in the study of social representations shared among the respondents, it was possible to establish a stable, coherent, resists changes and assumes a representativeness of the study group, the association of reservoir and the region with dirt, pollution and abandonment. Although these also associate it with the leisure, because this region also is characterized for being a tourist pole, although already presents evident indications and environmental degradation.

This can be seen also in some testimonials made in the questionnaire, as described below:

"1970s? The reservoir had life, lush nature, clean water. Today we have the risk of catching leptospirosis and other diseases, we had a lot of quality fish for our food, today we have environmental degradation" (Resident of the region before the ferry-boat, 65 years old).

"The Billings Reservoir is very important for the region, whether for leisure or for work (fishing), but is abandoned, polluted due to the negligence of residents and rulers" (Resident of the region before the ferry-boat, 28 years old).

"I consider the Billings Reservoir very beautiful, although it is polluted and dirty and without fish, it is still navigable" (Resident of the region before the ferry-boat, 60 years old).

According to Moscovici (2015) the world is perceived according to our perceptions, ideas and attributions. This triad is a response to stimuli from the environment in which we live. And the social representations, referring to the reality, are adjustments of the perceptive and cognitive systems according to everything that we have:

> Representations guide us toward what is visible as what we must respond to; or that relate appearance to reality; or again to what defines that reality. I do not mean that such representations correspond to something we call the external world. I simply realize that, as far as reality is concerned, these representations are all we have, what our perceptual systems, as cognitive, are adjusted (Moscovici 2015, p. 31).

Therefore, the pollution that appeared as the probable central nucleus of the representations constitutes the way in which the dam and the region were perceived, signified and represented.

The word dirt - which also appeared as a central nucleus reinforces the representation of the dam and the region as a polluted site. As noted earlier, some participants still associated the abandonment of the dam and the region with disorderly growth, according to the following statement:

> "Dirt, garbage and sewage the abandonment of the dam this contributes to the disorderly growth of houses, not giving respect to the waters of the dam" (*Resident of the region before the ferry-boat*, 48 years old).

Since the reason for the solid waste is much cited, it may be related to the fact that in some places in the region do not pass truck collecting these materials, especially in the post-balsa region, as demanded by some participants of the meeting.

On the other hand, when asked if they believed that the Riacho Grande pollution index was affecting the health of the residents, most of them answered yes: "Yes, because of the pollution"; "Yes, because of the contaminated reservoir (one of the residents described that the reservoir is contaminated with" sewage, mercury and radioactive capsule "); "Yes, street dust without asphalt"; "Yes, we are interconnected."

However, when asked the participants who should care for the environment, the vast majority (96%) answered that it is everyone's duty, including some to describe how they contributed - planting, recycling, non-polluting, among others. Analyzing the complete answers of the research subjects in the questionnaire, it was verified that the residents of the subprefecture not only considered themselves responsible for caring for the environment, but also knew their duties to contribute to the preservation and conservation of nature.

"All of us. It is necessary to be aware that we depend on it for the future" (*resident of the region before the ferry-boat*, 26 years).

"All of us. I could contribute by saving and not destroying" (*resident of the region before the ferry-boat,* 44 years old).

"Everyone, separating the recyclable waste and putting it in the right place" (*resident of the region before the ferry-boat*, 39 years old).

"We are all responsible, separating the household waste from the house, not throwing trash in the streets, etc." (*resident of the region before the ferry-boat*, 28 years old).

Only two participants did not consider themselves, according to their answers, as responsible for the environment, assigning the obligation to third parties. The two responses are described below:

"The person responsible for caring for the environment is the collection of household waste" (resident of the region before the ferry-boat, 48 years old).

"The environmental police is responsible for caring for the environment" (*resident of the region before the ferry-boat*, 63 years old).

It was also verified, topophilic feelings connected to the Riacho Grande, that, according to Tuan (1980), can reflect the affective bonds of the human beings with the place or material environment. With 46 participants (96%) said they liked the place. And the clear majority, including the different groups of salary range and schooling also stated not to have the pretense of moving to another place. And when asked about the Billings Dam, the participants mentioned the beauty of the place, using not only this word,

but also expressions synonymous to this, such as beautiful, beautiful and grandeur.

Finally, the importance of education was also quoted in the responses. The subjects of the research believed that, through environmental education and learning about selective collection, people could become aware of socio-environmental problems, arousing the interest and responsibility of taking care of their environment.

"We should all contribute through environmental education." (resident of the region before the ferry-boat, 45 years old).

"In addition to governments, we the communities themselves. Passing to the residents the learning, about selective collection, etc." (*resident of the region before the ferry-boat*, 68 years old).

These results suggest an integrative question of the reflections proposed in the present work, which will be further elaborated in item 3.3 below: who would be responsible for the pollution, dirt and abandonment mentioned in the answers to the questionnaire? Were the weekend tourists or the municipal government not doing their part? Is it clear that the participants of the meetings of the subprefecture seemed to have affective ties with the place and sought, through the exercise of citizenship and the use of a public space of organized presence, to solve the environmental issues of the region?

DISCUSSION

Although some researchers point to the decline in the contemporary city in relation to the use and influence of public spaces, be they free access or restricted access, due to the influence of large corporations and the power of new media, determining, at first glance, the

idea of weakening and decaying this sphere, as discussed by Oliveira (2010). This did not appear to be the reality observed at the meetings of the subprefecture in question until the time of the present study, since the public space of the meetings is currently in disuse.

With the opening of Brazilian politics in the 1980s, the process of rupture with the authoritarian and centralized power of the military regime began, and the participatory ideology intensified, in which the most diverse organized sectors of society sought to construct forms and to find instruments capable of influencing public administrations in the country (Rocha 2009).

During this period there were decision-making processes for the management and control of public resources. In this scenario, there were strong clashes between state power, social movements and the organization of civil society, unleashing a trajectory of struggles for democratic expansion. However, there are still barriers in the meetings and disagreements between the State and civil society. The reality observed in the meetings of the subprefecture is an example, since the meetings of the subprefecture were suspended after a change of party by the elected representatives, as evidenced by an interview with the former deputy-mayor. Therefore, the public space that could favor the exercise of citizenship and reflections on socio-environmental responsibility, no longer exists. Neither the possibility of individuals having direct contact with the representative of the district, that is, the deputy-mayor.

The absence of the public space for the exercise of citizenship can reflect in several aspects, such as social responsibility and the democratic relationship between people and public power. According to Jayanthan & Singh (2016), social responsibility is related to citizenship, since the fundamental aspects for participatory citizenship and democracy include social responsibility, participatory monitoring and participatory evaluation and communication. One way to build an environment with democracy is to facilitate relations between people and institutions of governance (Gaventa 2004).

But there is a gap between ordinary people and institutions that affect their own lives. In this distance there is a growing disillusionment of citizens with their governments (Gaventa 2004). An example of this gap is the nullification of a space in which the citizen could control, to a certain extent, the power of the decisions of the municipality, mainly regarding emergency measures of his community. These disillusions are based on the lack of aid to people of low purchasing power and the disconnection with the lives of ordinary citizens.

When the subjects are concerned with the decisions taken in the district and seek to contribute to the proper functioning of the neighborhood as a whole, they reach the status of citizen, in his liberal conception defined by Habermas (1995). And this status applied to the attendants of the subprefecture who took their demands and complaints to the meetings, where they came to be part of political life and controlled to what extent the power of the state is exercised in their own interest as private persons and neighborhood leaders.

Likewise, the regulators were related to the status of citizen in the republican conception, in which the citizen has rights of participation and political communication, exercising his citizenship and participating in a common practice, because as analyzed in the results, different salary ranges and levels of participated in the meetings. When the public exposes their demands, he thanks those who have already been conceived and takes from the public power those that have not yet been fulfilled, it allows

this subject and other participant who delegate the same attitudes, to become political actors, who demand their rights, as a community of free and equal people. And with the use of a space such as the one of the subprefecture to the stimulus of the environmental citizenship allows that the regulars can reach the vision of ecological world, with the stimulus of pro-environmental measures (Wan et al. 2007).

In this study, it was not the influence of the big corporations and the power of the new media, that caused the weakening and decay in the public space in question, but rather party disputes that did not take into account the existence of an environment conducive for the residents to participate and to know the district's future decisions. According to the former subprefect (from year 2012-2016) and one of the leaders of the Rio Grande Neighborhood, the meetings in the subprefecture were suspended indefinitely after the party exchange between the old and current mayor of the city:

> *"There is no one for the post of Deputy. In the building where the meetings of the subprefecture took place now only the easy network works. The current mayor's democracy does not presuppose dialogue with the community" (Former deputy-mayor 2017)*

> *"There are no more meetings in the subprefecture building. The new mayor who is from another party, so far has not indicated anyone to the post of deputy-mayor, we were without the space that allowed a manager to serve the population" (Resident of Riacho Grande 39 years old).*

According to Jacobi (2003), the challenge of strengthening citizenship lies in the population that has the rights and duties to become a co-responsible actor in the defense of the quality of life. The meeting space could be an environment conducive to citizenship.

The environmental perception related to pollution, topophilic feelings about the place and the existence of the responsibility to take care of the environment were demonstrations that the subjects that attended the meetings were troubled by the socio-environmental conditions in which they lived but that even in the face of dissatisfaction they continued to find motives for stay and protect their space, however, without a space like the Subprefecture the subjects can have their expressions repressed and with that demotivate every community. Considering that according to Sato (2003) citizenship involves actions of both the subject itself, as in mobilizing such individual engage more people to also take actions to promote solutions to the problems in the relationship between people and the environment or in preventing problems environmental impacts.

In this sense, returning to the integrative question made previously, the causes or possible responsible for the pollution, dirt and abandonment mentioned in the questionnaire can be multifactorial, being the tourists of weekend, the residents themselves, in general, although the representatives would take demands in this direction and appear to have affection for the region. As well as the public power that fails to encourage the participation of the population in reflections on the problems of the region, including those of a socio-environmental nature, by rendering useless a public space that motivated citizens to perceive and co-responsible for the environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Researchers (Eisenberg 2003, Levy 2010, Bonin 2011) point out that the decrease and lack of

public spaces are motivated by large corporations and influences of new media. However, these reasons do not seem to be related to the rupture of the public space of organized presence available in the meetings of the subprefecture of the district of Riacho Grande, until the moment of this study. The meetings closed soon after the change of representative of the public power, as well as political party of the city of São Bernardo of the Field. With the interruption of the meetings and concomitantly the public space, the possibility of exercising citizenship and dialogues about the environmental issues in the place was broken. One possible consequence is that there is a decrease in subjects that through the exercise of citizenship sought to solve the socio-environmental issues of the region. It can also increase those responsible for pollution, dirt and abandonment, which go beyond weekend tourists or the failure of the municipal government to take care of the environment, with the residents themselves potentially responsible.

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Each author contributed individually and significantly to the development of the study. Reis DP and Farias LA developed the theoretical framework and led the writing of the manuscript, Neiman Z and Rabinovici A contributed with analysis tools for social sciences and data analysis, in addition to the final elaboration of the text. Romero FC contributed to the English textual review of the work. Farias LA was also involved in the planning and supervised the work.