

Political awareness and participation of representatives of civil society in the Municipal Council of Social Assistance of Vitória – ES – Brazil

ARTHUR GOMES DAU¹

MÁRCIA PREZOTTI PALASSI¹

MARTA ZORZAL E SILVA²

¹ UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO ESPÍRITO SANTO (UFES) / DEPARTAMENTO DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO, PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM ADMINISTRAÇÃO, VITÓRIA – ES, BRAZIL

² UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO ESPÍRITO SANTO (UFES) / DEPARTAMENTO DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS, PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS, VITÓRIA – ES, BRAZIL

Abstract

This article aims to understand the political awareness and the participation of members and deputy members representing civil society in the Municipal Council of Social Assistance of Vitória (ES). The discussion is based on the political awareness model for understanding participation in collective actions developed by Sandoval (2001). It is a qualitative research, with data obtained through analysis of documents, non-participant observation in the council's plenary sessions, and semi-structured interviews with eight members and deputy members representing civil society in the Municipal Council of Social Assistance. The data collected was then submitted to content analysis (BARDIN, 2004). The subjects studied represented three different segments of civil society and the results revealed different forms of political awareness between them: representatives of social services users were more sensitive to aspects such as collective identity, political efficacy, and justice and injustice. Representatives of nonprofit showed to be more sensitive to aspects such as collective identity, antagonistic and opposing interests, and political efficacy. Representatives of the workers in the field of social services demonstrated sensitivity toward political efficacy and justice and injustice. The conclusion is that different political awareness influences how: representatives of workers participate in a limited way to the plenary sessions, and more on thematic commissions and providing technical support to nonprofits. Representatives of service users participate more comprehensively in social movements, neighborhood associations, and demanding for social services from the public administration. Representatives of nonprofits participate in social movements, in activities related to the public administration and in activities involving the nonprofits' beneficiaries.

Keywords: Participatory Councils. Political awareness. Citizen Participation. Organizational Studies. Public Administration.

Consciência política e participação dos representantes da sociedade civil no Conselho Municipal de Assistência Social de Vitória – ES

Resumo

Neste artigo visa-se compreender como se configuram a consciência política e a participação dos conselheiros titulares e suplentes representantes da sociedade civil no Conselho Municipal de Assistência Social de Vitória (ES). A discussão baseia-se no modelo de consciência política para compreensão da participação em ações coletivas, de Sandoval (2001). Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa, cujos dados – posteriormente submetidos à análise de conteúdo (BARDIN, 2004) – foram obtidos por meio de análise de documentos, observação não participante às plenárias e entrevistas semiestruturadas com 8 conselheiros titulares e suplentes representantes da sociedade civil no Conselho. Os resultados revelaram configurações diferentes de consciência política entre os três segmentos representativos da sociedade civil no conselho: representantes dos usuários demonstraram-se mais propensos a sentimentos envolvendo a *identidade coletiva*, *eficácia política* e sentimentos de *justiça e injustiça*. Representantes de entidades mostraram-se mais ligados a sentimentos de *identidade coletiva*, *interesses antagônicos e adversários* e *eficácia política*. Representantes dos trabalhadores da área demonstraram sentimentos ligados a *eficácia política* e *sentimentos de justiça e injustiça*. Conclui-se que diferentes consciências políticas interferem na participação dos representantes: representantes de trabalhadores participam de maneira limitada às plenárias, focando-se mais em comissões temáticas e ONGs. Representantes de usuários participam de maneira mais abrangente de movimentos sociais, associações de bairros e cobram da administração pública ações de interesse social. Representantes de entidades participam de movimentos sociais, de ações em relação ao poder público e de movimentos que envolvem os assistidos pelas entidades.

Palavras-chave: Consciência Política. Participação. Conselhos Gestores. Estudos Organizacionais. Administração Pública.

Conciencia política y participación de los representantes de la sociedad civil en el Consejo Municipal de Asistencia Social de Vitória – ES – Brasil

Resumen

En este artículo se pretende comprender cómo se configuran la conciencia política y la participación de los consejeros titulares y suplentes representantes de la sociedad civil en el Consejo Municipal de Asistencia Social de Vitória (estado de Espírito Santo). La discusión se basa en el modelo de conciencia política para la comprensión de la participación en acciones colectivas de Sandoval (2001). Es una investigación cualitativa, cuyos datos se obtuvieron a través del análisis de documentos, observación no participante en las reuniones plenarias y entrevistas semiestruturadas con 8 consejeros titulares y suplentes representantes de la sociedad civil en el Consejo, sometidos al análisis de contenido. Los resultados revelaron configuraciones diferentes de conciencia política entre los tres segmentos representativos de la sociedad civil en el consejo: representantes de los usuarios más propensos a sentimientos involucrados con la identidad colectiva, eficacia política y sentimientos de justicia e injusticia. Representantes de entidades más vinculados a sentimientos de identidad colectiva, intereses antagónicos y adversarios y eficacia política. Los representantes de los trabajadores del área mostraron sentimientos vinculados a la eficacia política y sentimientos de justicia e injusticia. Se concluye que diferentes conciencias interfieren en la participación de los representantes: los representantes de trabajadores participan de manera limitada en las plenarias, centrándose más en comisiones temáticas y en ONG. Los representantes de usuarios participan de manera más amplia en movimientos sociales, asociaciones de barrios y exigen de la administración pública acciones de interés social. Los representantes de entidades participan en movimientos sociales, en acciones en relación al poder público y en movimientos que involucran a los asistidos por las entidades.

Palabras clave: Conciencia política. Participación. Consejos gestores. Estudios organizacionales. Administración pública.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last century's final decades, the topic of social participation became the center of attention for several research agendas, in the fields of Social Sciences and Public Administration both. This happened not only in Brazil, but also in several other Latin American countries and in Europe. In Brazil, as a result of the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, with its institutionalization of participatory mechanisms, the debate on the theme of social participation gained new contours and disputes of meaning in the academic field and in the public sphere. Different aspects and points of view have fueled this discussion, forming a vast literature that seeks to circumscribe and problematize the theme, dealing with issues ranging from the legitimacy of council representation, the way representatives are chosen, council's functional dynamics, fragilities of the councilors representing civil society vis-à-vis those who represent public administration, to the effectiveness of councils, among many other dimensions analyzed. A broad debate has emerged to understand and improve relations between society and governments (AVRITZER, 2011). The creation and institutionalization of these mechanisms has provided openness for popular participation in Brazilian democracy and for the flourishing of debate.

In this regard, Lavalle (2015, p. 18, own translation) argues that the "... extension of the social participation and access channels of civil society actors to the State, or more precisely, to the decision-making and public-policy bodies is, undoubtedly, one of the novel, distinctive features of the post-transition period." Various forms of participatory arrangements have emerged at the municipal, state and federal levels, such as thousands of public policy management councils, hundreds of participatory budgeting experiences, and other very diverse interfaces between public administration and citizenship. These arrangements include conferences, participatory master plans, thematic commissions and committees, public hearings, local plans, work groups, among others (GOHN, 2011). In addition, over the last decades the institutionalization of various forms of social participation and representation has encouraged a greater role of civil society in the state sphere. This occurs in the elaboration and monitoring of public policies, and also in their management and implementation (LAVALLE, 2011a; AVRITZER, 2011).

Participation and social representation, understood as taking part in the political process through government agencies, "... are not merely an episodic or transient event, but a relatively stable process, made part of the State's legal language and instituted as a characteristic element of public management" (CARLOS, 2015, p. 23, own translation). Thus, these participatory institutions are understood as new political opportunities for participation and representation in the design of public policies and in the regulation of governmental action. In this sense, they give opportunities for distinct social groups, notoriously voiceless in the political arena, to express their demands, "... stimulating the growth of civil associationism and the pluralization of the participative spheres" (CARLOS, 2015, p. 87, own translation).

However, these institutions need to be "[...] perceived by collective actors as opportunities for the concretization of policies in their interest" (CARLOS, 2015, p. 88, own translation). This means that these channels, in practice, are interpenetrated by cultural references that involve "[...] cognitive and cultural interpretation about changes in the political context, which need to be perceived and processed by actors as incentives for their collective action" (CARLOS, 2015, p. 88, own translation). At the same time, for collective actors, participatory institutions can represent a constraint, insofar as they influence behavior by producing restrictions and organizational effects on their standards of collective action.

Although participatory institutions in Brazil have reached a wide spectrum of possibilities and territorial density in terms of the diversity of channels created at the three levels of government, this does not mean that the effectiveness of these participatory institutions is unquestionable in its consequences for public policies and governments. Obstacles and constraints hampering the protagonism of societal actors can be perceived in the functional dynamics of these plural instances.

The greater interaction between civil society and public management was made possible through institutions created by federal laws and municipal laws, in the context of strong societal demands that marked the end of the 1980s. The Social Policy Councils (for health, social assistance, education, etc.) have their origin in federal legislation, which instituted them as mandatory for the composition of structuring policies at the three levels of government, aiming at the decentralization and municipalization of these policies as a condition for the transfer of budgetary funds (SILVA, RODRIGUES, TATAGIBA et al., 2009). The councils thus emerged as spaces of representation and societal participation, theoretically endowed with the power of political transformation, as they would constitute new relations between the public power and the diverse representative segments of civil society (OLIVEIRA and PEREIRA, 2014). In addition, it should be noted that participatory institutions obey variable configurations "... distinguishable by their format and rules of internal functioning, by the profile of their participants and by

the results they achieve” (CARLOS, 2015, p. 82, own translation). In the case of Managing Councils, their institutional design – which differs from that of the Participatory Budget, which articulates mechanisms of direct and representative democracy – is characterized by their composition: representatives of both civil society and the state. In addition, councils have different rules depending on the public policy to which they are linked. Thus, their composition by representatives of civil society and government obeys specific laws that define them as either paritary, civically super-representative or governmentally super-representative (TATAGIBA, 2004). In the first case, the council has an equal number of seats for representatives of civil society and government; in the second, there are more representatives of civil society; in the third, there is a greater number of government representatives.

Since their inception, the councils have been undergoing a process of operational structuring. According to Lavallo (2011b, p. 17, own translation), “it was necessary to define the routines, to shape the regiments, to keep them active and to train experienced advisors, and this required and continues to require considerable time and energy from the part of social actors.” This is not an easy process, because societal participation presents the paradoxical question of possible perverse effects on the actors engaged in it, from the point of view of civil society and government both. The vast literature on management councils has already diagnosed several factors that intervene in the relationship between representatives of civil society and government representatives. These include: lack of participatory tradition, which generates problems of various orders; fragmentation of actions; lack of physical infrastructure; use of councils for political maneuvers; insufficient or exiguous training of directors; weak empowerment; lack of clarity by civil actors about what participation really means (since it is often seen as limited to physical presence), among others. (WENDHAUSEN, BARBOSA and BORBA, 2006; ABERS and KECK, 2008; DAMASCENO and GÓIS, 2010).

Despite their territorial capillarity and the need to conduct systematic studies on the effects of participatory institutions on public policies, in addition to standardized analysis of how effective participation is (LAVALLE, 2011a), the structural problems and institutional limitations of these spaces also merit consideration. Alongside these constraints, some complexities are brought in by the citizens themselves, reproduced in the form of distinct ideologies, diverse identities, societal values, the will to act collectively, etc., which directly reflect the functioning of these participatory spaces (DE LA FUENTE, 2010).

This study focuses on the political awareness of societal actors as representatives of civil society in participatory institutions. It is anchored in the theoretical framework of social psychology, especially political psychology. It has the Municipal Council of Social Assistance of the municipality of Vitória – ES (COMASV) as its empirical referential. Collective action is based on the perceptions of individuals as they participate in a given social movement, mediated by habits and customs that guide their discourses and ideologies. Sandoval’s (2001) analytical model of political consciousness provides a theoretical lens for understanding consciousness in participatory processes of collective action. This model has been mobilized by studies that require understanding the reflections an individual makes to decide whether to act individually or collectively.

The analysis of the model’s dimensions allows for a diagnosis of societal actors’ motivations for participation (SANDOVAL, 2001). Thus, it enables one to understand which factors and ideas guide council members’ participation and how this participation configures itself within the council. This article seeks to fill an important gap in the literature on management councils by using the perspective of social psychology to address the political consciousness of councilpeople. It also contributes to research on collective action patterns by examining these patterns through the alternative perspective of Sandoval’s model. The article is divided into four sections, in addition to this introduction: a brief presentation of Sandoval’s political consciousness model, methodological aspects, main results, and final considerations.

SALVADOR SANDOVAL’S ANALYTICAL MODEL OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

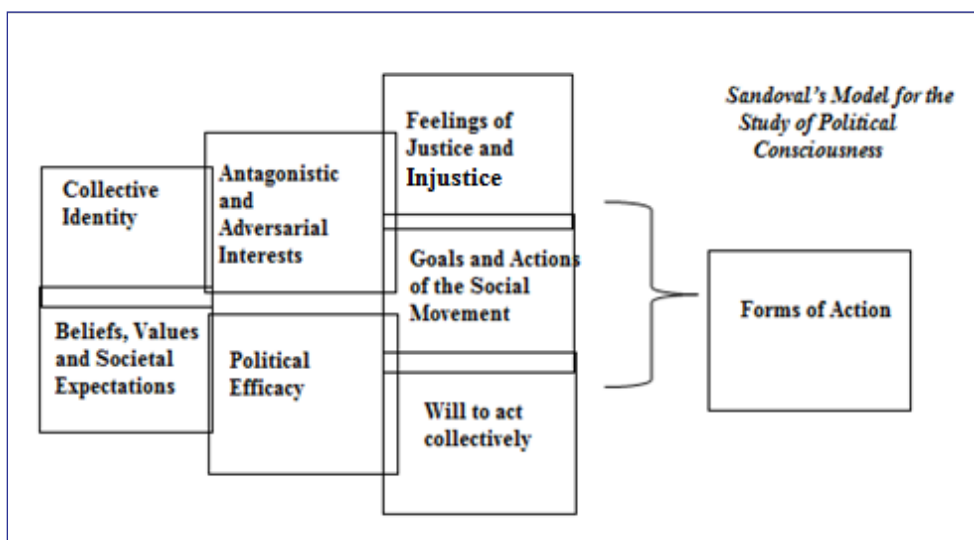
Sandoval’s (2001) analytical model of political consciousness is inspired by Touraine’s concept of *working-class consciousness* (1966). Touraine’s construct is based on three fundamental dimensions: identity (class conscience), opposition (the individual’s perception of their group and groups distinct from their own) and totality (the individual’s perception of social totality, that is, the distribution of goods, domination, as well as its functioning and dynamics). To these dimensions Sandoval adds another one: predisposition for intervention. For Sandoval, political consciousness is a set of sociopsychological dimensions that interrelate meanings and information, leading individuals to orient themselves and make decisions that represent the best

course of action within a specific context (SANDOVAL, 2001). Therefore political consciousness is understood as a combination of identity aspects, articulated directly with individuals' beliefs and relations with the society in which they live. Political consciousness emerges from dialogue, from the interaction between culture and cognition, from individual opinion about the social world and systems of ideologies, whether they are institutions, symbols, places or cultural codes (ANSARA, 2008). As such, it is constantly changing with each new lived experience, shaped and built on the meanings that individuals attribute to social reality (COSTA, 2007; LUGON and PALASSI, 2012).

Sandoval (2001) proposes an analytical model of political consciousness, constituted by seven dimensions: collective identity; beliefs, values, and expectations; antagonistic and adversarial interests; political effectiveness; feelings of justice and injustice; will to act collectively; goals and actions of the social movement. These dimensions are conceptualized in the form of feelings, allowing one "to visualize the changes in social structures and relations and how they affect the predisposition of people to act in defense of their interests" (PALASSI, 2011, p. 137, own translation). It is worth noting that there is no hierarchy between these dimensions: they are meant to analyze the reflections performed by a social actor in their decision to participate in a collective or individual action (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Analytical model of political consciousness for the understanding of participation in collective actions



Source: Sandoval (2001, p. 186, own translation).

Collective identity is characterized by a feeling of belonging or by an individual's identification to one or more social groups. This notion is based on the concept of collective identity, as defined by Melucci's psychosocial theory of collective action (1995). In respect to the participation of individuals in collective actions, Melucci analyzes their context as an opportunity and objective constraint, seen as a product of the interaction between societal and institutional actors. In this inter-relational space, actors communicate, produce and negotiate meanings, evaluate and recognize what they have in common and make decisions (ALONSO, 2009). Palassi (2011) stresses that *collective identity* is the starting point for the understanding of political consciousness. This is because this dimension is a set of feelings of belonging and identification of individuals with respect to their social environment, giving collective actors a psychological identification in terms of common interests, feelings of reciprocity and belonging.

The *beliefs, values and societal expectations* the individual develops in daily life constitute the field of this individual's perceptions of the world they live in. Sandoval, supported by Heller (1972), asserts that these feelings emerge spontaneously during daily life, causing the individual to assimilate facts, behaviors and beliefs without subjecting them to reflection. Individuals suffer from a process of crystallization, resulting from the spontaneity of daily life, from manipulative or alienating elements, or from conformity (ANSARA, 2008). Thus, this dimension reveals the lens through which the individual sees and interprets society, its perspectives and expectations on subjects that involve their and their equals' daily lives. This representation of

the social, with which the individual constructs a conception about society, is based on how this individual understands and defines it (SANDOVAL, 2001).

The *identification of antagonistic and adversarial interests* consists in the individual's feeling about how their material and symbolic interests oppose the interests of other groups, and on the extent to which these antagonistic interests lead to the conception of collective adversaries in society (SANDOVAL, 2001). This context creates the need for the notion of a visible adversary, so that individuals and coordinated actions can be mobilized against a specific target, for a common goal. Without this perception, it is difficult or impossible to mobilize individuals to carry out or systematize actions against or in favor of a certain objective (SANDOVAL, 2001; SILVA, 2007).

Political efficacy seeks to understand individuals' feelings about their ability to interfere in a political situation. To address this aspect, Sandoval (2001) relies on Hewstone's theory of attribution (1989), which interprets the causality nexus according to three *loci*: perceived impotence in the face of natural and transcendent phenomena; the search for individual solutions to social problems; and collective solutions to afflictions involving the group to which the individual belongs. Sandoval (2001) argues that it is through this dimension that one discovers whether individuals are capable of changing their own lives. Thus, in certain situations the individual tends to become less prone to action and also internalize feelings of conformity (SANDOVAL, 2001; SILVA, 2007).

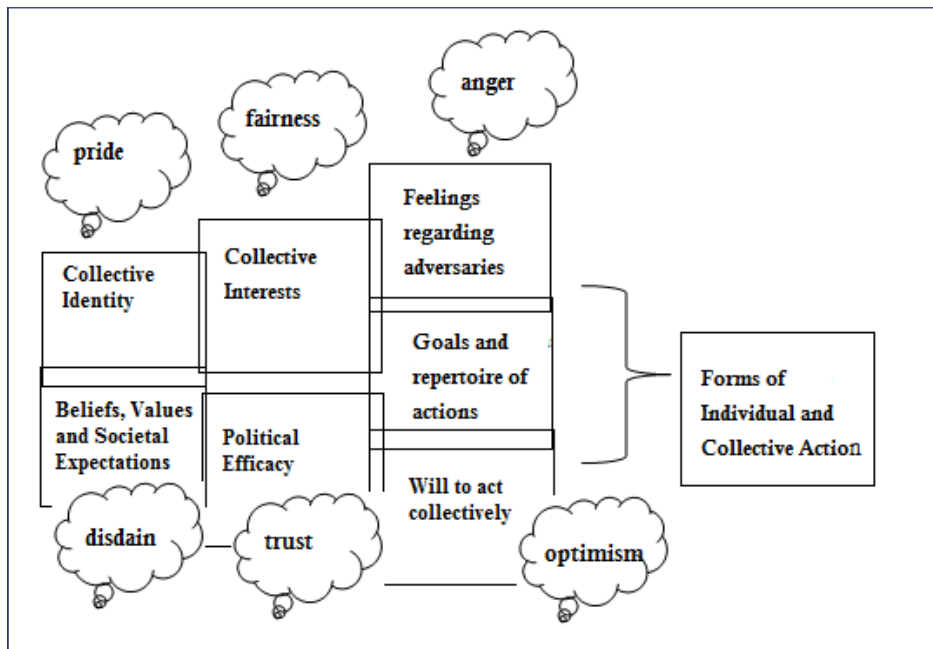
Feelings of justice and injustice explain the individual's ability to perceive the existing level of social reciprocity (SANDOVAL, 2001). The author is based on Moore's concept of social justice (1978), which refers to the sense of agreement between obligations and rewards. When the individual believes in the absence of balance between these two imperatives, there is a perception of injustice or that the rewards given to a certain actor are unjust. Thus, the individual distinguishes which actors can be considered just. Feelings involving the violation of reciprocity are conjectured as originating from unfair situations, present in collective discontent during the pursuit of political demands, and when accountability is demanded from political adversaries (SANDOVAL, 2001; PALASSI, 2011; SOUZA, PALASSI and LEITE DA SILVA, 2015).

The *will to act collectively* is the most instrumental aspect of an individual's predisposition to carry out a set of collective actions, not only to repair injustices, but also to achieve other goals (SANDOVAL, 2001). On this point, Sandoval is based on Klandermans (1992), who highlights three aspects of collective participation: the first refers to the costs and benefits of interpersonal and loyalty bonds, resulting from participation in a given movement; the second refers to gains and losses of material benefits resulting from participation in a given movement, and the third refers to the physical risks of engaging in collective actions. From these three aspects, one is able to obtain the individual's assessment of the movement's organization and its capacity to implement the proposed actions. The focus here is the rational perception of the individual, who is endowed with analytical capacity, i.e., able to evaluate factors that stimulate engagement in collective action (PALASSI, MARTINS and PAES DE PAULA, 2016).

Goals and actions of the social movement relate to the degree to which participants perceive a correspondence between the objectives of the movement – its strategies of action, feelings of injustice, political efficacy – and what the movement effectively carries out. This dimension focuses on the individual's perception of the movement's actions, and whether they are consistent with the ideological, material, and symbolic elements from whence it emerged (SANDOVAL, 2001). This perception, which counterposes the theoretical basis of the movement and its ideals to its concrete existence, expresses the adherence of the individual to a participatory organization or movement. Sandoval explains that this dimension knits together other components of political consciousness, as well as the *will to act collectively*, and influences the individual's sociopsychological predisposition to act collectively (SANDOVAL, 2001; PALASSI, 2011).

In a recent update of this model, Sandoval and Silva (2016) start from the assumption that emotions have a "... functional and key role in the formation of political consciousness" (SANDOVAL and SILVA, 2016, p. 46, own translation). For the authors, emotions are the result of experiences lived by the individuals and, therefore, inhabit their memory. In addition, they play key roles in the process of engaging a social movement, influencing the acquisition of consciousness and the sociability of individuals. In this way, emotions support "... the remembrance of past experiences and, therefore, of each individual's lived history" (SANDOVAL and SILVA, 2016, p. 47, own translation). Figure 2 illustrates this process. The emotions mentioned in the figure are just illustrations, that is, the process is not limited to this specific set of feelings.

Figure 2
Conceptual model of political consciousness



Source: Sandoval and Silva (2016, p. 48).

Sandoval and Silva (2016) suggest the withdrawal of the *justice and injustice* dimension, since these feelings also permeate the other dimensions, during their constitution. However, for the purposes of this work, we adopted the seven dimensions proposed in the first model as the analysis criterion. *Justice and injustice* allows the researcher to understand how the emotions mentioned by Sandoval and Silva (2016) emerge and how they guide the actions of individuals within social movements.

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Given the adopted theoretical referential, the research methodology favored qualitative methods. Among the secondary data, COMASV documents were collected and analyzed (PIMENTEL, 2001), such as: laws, regulations and minutes of the meetings for the months of June 2015 to December 2016 (administrative triennium 2015-2018). Nonparticipant observation was also carried out in plenary meetings (ordinary and extraordinary), from September to December 2016, counting 4 (four) meetings (FERREIRA, TORRECILHA and MACHADO, 2012). The focus of the observation was a group of civil society representatives. The record of these observations was systematized in a field diary (MOREIRA, 2004). Semi-structured interviews (FRASER and GONDIM, 2004) were also carried out with five permanent councilpeople and three substitute representatives of civil society, in the same period. All of these data were submitted to content analysis (BARDIN, 2004), with categories established a priori according to the dimensions present in Sandoval's (2001) model. The use of the interview technique aimed at direct contact between the researcher and the research subjects, in order to "... understand the phenomena according to the subjects' perspective, that is, according to the participants of the study" (GODOY, 1995, p. 1-7).

Diagram 1 presents the study's methodological strategy as well as the information obtained through the employed collection instruments:

Box 1

Methodological strategy

Research Instruments	Objectives	Collected information
Document analysis	This first survey aimed at understanding the functioning of the council, its structuring, the mechanisms through which it opened itself to society, the methods of the plenary sessions, the elections of councilors, as well as the objectives of the COMASV in relation to society and public administration in the municipality of Vitória (ES).	Contributed to clarify aspects of the council's functioning and how its organizational model can interfere in the participatory process of council members, thus providing material to support the subsequent analyses.
Analysis of minutes	The analysis of minutes sought to interpret the actions and discussions held during the plenary meetings, to create an appreciation of the actions of the councilpeople in meetings where the researcher was not present.	Uncovered particularities involving the functional mechanisms of the plenary sessions, as well as the behavior of the council members during the meetings, pointing to attitudes, actions and facts that contributed to the analysis of political consciousness, following Sandoval's model (2001).
Nonparticipant observation	Nonparticipant observation was complementary to the analysis of minutes, and aimed at revealing peculiarities the researcher might have missed.	Pointed to subjective elements that could not be apprehended by the examination of the minutes alone: participation, contestation, passivity, nonchalance, lack of patience, boredom, tiredness, participatory interest, attention, willingness, collective spirit, and interest in discussing matters pertinent to the meeting's agenda.
Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews allowed us to obtain an outline of the councilpeople's life trajectories and essentially analyze their consciousness of the importance of their roles. The central points of questioning were subsidized by the dimensions of Sandoval's political consciousness model.	This pointed to elements of Sandoval's eight dimensions in the interviewees' speeches, but in a different way among the three segments that make up the council: users' representatives, representatives of professionals and representatives of entities – as discussed in the analysis of results.

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2017).

POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES IN THE COMASV

The Municipal Council of Social Assistance of Vitória (COMASV) aims to monitor, supervise and evaluate the municipal social assistance policy. It is comprised of 16 councilpeople and their respective alternates: 8 representatives of civil society and 8 representatives of the municipal public power. Among civil society representatives, there are three groups: 3 users' representatives, 4 representatives of entities, and 1 representative of social assistance professionals. Each councilperson has a respective alternate, who is assigned to the same category of representation. The representation mandate lasts for three years. The distribution of seats within the council is characterized by parity.

The systematization and analysis of the data showed the existence of distinct political consciousnesses and participatory configurations in the three types of representation of civil society: a) representatives of social entities and organizations, b) users' representatives, and c) representatives of social assistance professionals (class councils and trade unions). The data evidenced the dimensions enunciated in Sandoval's political consciousness model: *collective identity; beliefs, values and expectations; antagonistic and adversarial interests; political efficacy; justice and injustice; goals and actions of the social movement, and will to act collectively* – constituted, however, in a particular way.

The participation of representatives of civil society in COMASV is characterized mainly by the feelings categorized as *collective identity*, *political efficacy* and *will to act collectively*. These three dimensions of Sandoval's political consciousness model point to the key *values* of the councilpeople, which engage them in activities inside and outside the council.

When analyzing *collective identity*, we perceived different segments within civil society, since councilpeople have heterogeneous feelings of belonging, which reflects in their participative action inside and outside COMASV. In their speeches, *users' representatives* always referred to their neighborhood and community companions, focusing mainly on their necessities and the necessities of their region. *Representatives of entities* have a significant link to the entity they represent, and to those assisted by the entity. *Collective identity* is stronger in councilors who represent the field's professionals: they act to provide unrestricted qualified support, and their sense of belonging is linked to their cause, practiced within the council, of improving the lives of people outside; it is not closely linked to those they directly assist.

In the *beliefs, values and expectations* of the research subjects, we observed uniform expressions that refer to the same sentiment: ethics and honesty. Interviews with councilpeople showed a set of feelings illustrative of what Brazilian society means to these people: lack of ethics in politics, urgent need for social justice and honesty. In this context, COMASV is seen as an important participatory instrument, but there are obstacles that hinder its functioning, whether they involve public powers, the infra-structure of the space, or the councilpeople themselves. In general, councilors regularly express the same group of *beliefs and values*, which guide their participation, have similar *expectations* about government, public management and politics, and also about the role of the councilperson in COMASV.

Feelings of *antagonistic and adversarial interests* are divergent among councilors. We found divergent interests among representatives, especially representatives of entities and organizations. This is due to the existence of agreements between entities and the public power, which can lead to political tendencies within the council. There is, on the one hand, a clear-cut, pragmatic view of the political processes that takes place within these participatory bodies and, on the other hand, a more romanticized look on participation. These differences in perspective and consciousness cause some fear during deliberations involving, for example, transfer of funds, since, according to some, certain entities may be left aside.

As far as *political efficacy* is concerned, feelings of collectivity are very clear among the councilors. There are reports of disbelief regarding the public power and the freedom of councilors and councils to solve problems. This reveals a discredit regarding the autonomy given to the council to act in face of the government and its social assistance policies. The feeling of capacity for action and for producing changes by the councilors is unanimous in all the representatives, with exceptions related to the functioning of the council itself, or adversities and imperfections in the actions of the municipal, state and federal public power. There are no reports and actions that express a lack of conviction regarding the competences given to the councilperson and the council in their social assistance work.

Concerning feelings of *justice and injustice*, two tendencies are noteworthy: three respondents believed in the existence of social injustice provoked by inequalities, and that governments are mainly responsible for this injustice. Five other councilors question this sense of injustice and feel that individuals are also responsible for their lives. They reiterate that the actions involving the council should not be assistentialist in character, but rather transformative. These *two types of consciousness* reveal different visions of social assistance and produce different actions and *expectations*.

Feelings surrounding the *will to act collectively* demonstrate that councilors perceive a collective effort underlying the council's actions. This is not, however, unanimous, since they do point to individualistic behavior by some representatives, who act for a particular purpose or only in the interests of specific groups. There is also awareness of the costs and benefits of engaging in collective action, such as: hindrances by the public power, personal resignations, financial costs, and a possible lack of government attention – all of which lead councilors to feel at times unmotivated, but not resigned, in relation to their work as representatives.

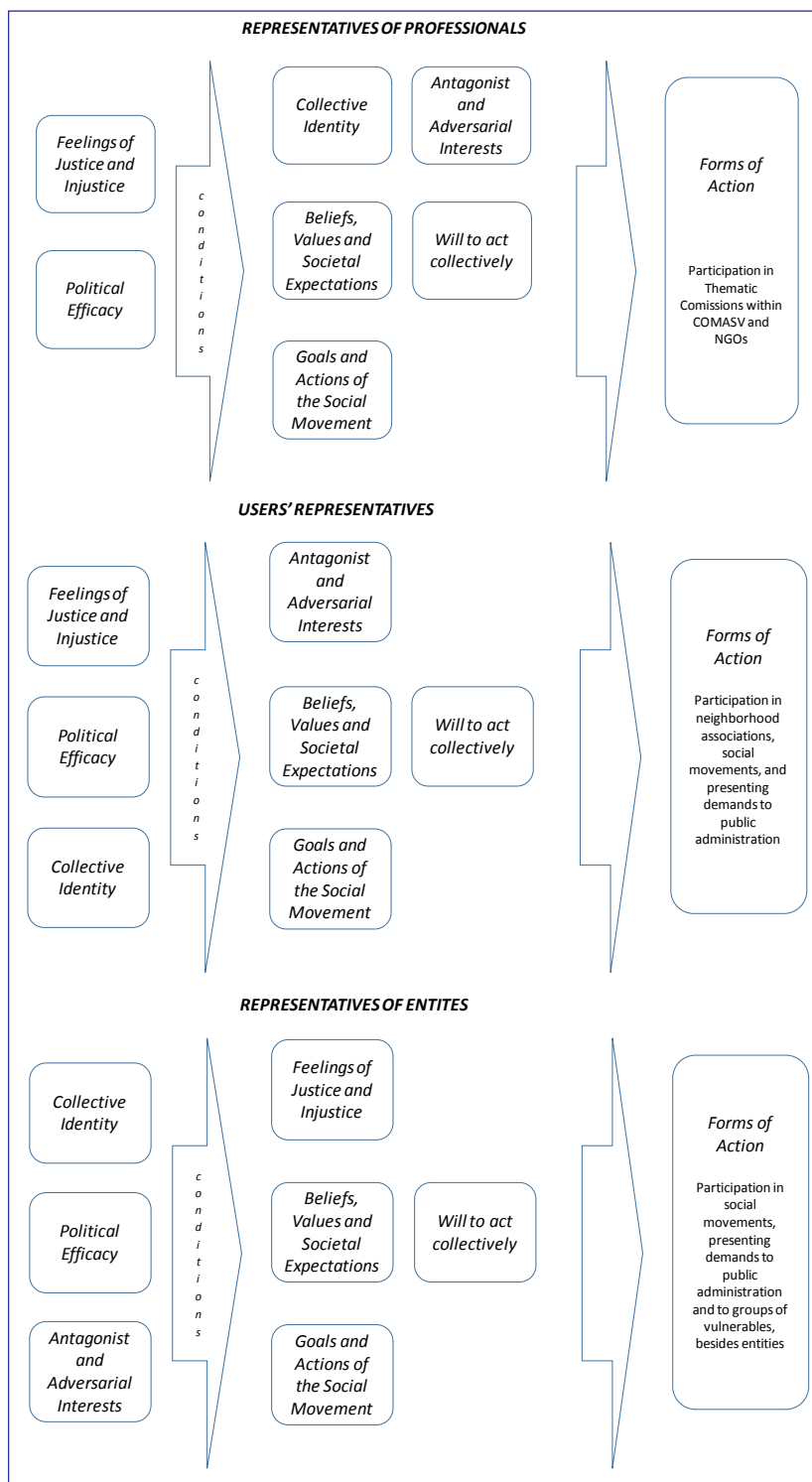
In the view of the research subjects, changes of plan are common throughout the work of a councilperson. There are, in this sense, gaps between the *goals* the concrete *actions of the social movement*. Councilpeople are certainly aware of that fact, and interested in reducing, whenever possible, this distance between the means and the ends. Councilpeople believe that change over time as a councilperson is natural, but should be managed, so the councilor's original goals and ideals are kept alive. The *values* councilors bring from their life experiences are essential to manage dispersion and avoid forgetting their main goals.

With the analysis of these dimensions, the existence of different political consciousnesses and participatory configurations became clear in the three types of civil society representation in the COMASV. Users' representatives show themselves more prone to feelings involving *collective identity* and *political efficacy*, as well as *justice and injustice*. Representatives of entities were more connected to feelings of *collective identity*, *antagonistic and adversarial interests*, and *political efficacy*. Professionals' representatives demonstrated feelings of *political efficacy* and *justice and injustice*. The other dimensions of the model were observed in all representative categories and guided behaviors related to other dimensions: *beliefs, values and societal expectations, will to act collectively, and goals and actions of the social movement*. These feelings reflected

the differing origins and life experiences of representatives of civil society, which conditioned the ideals and values that the subjects of the research brought from their trajectories. Such differences lie in the formation of their political consciousness. It is worth emphasizing that these differences condition the participation of these actors, according to the process of construction of each councilor’s political consciousness, shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Conceptual model of political consciousness



Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research data.

When dealing with *users' representatives*, the data showed a different participation model in comparison to the other groups of representatives. The sense of *collective identity* is noticeable both in the speeches and in the observation of plenaries. Users' representatives directly experience the problems of society, but are still able to bring solutions to these problems.

The interviews revealed a critical and profound construct in regard to public policies and the functioning of public administration. There is a knowledge about social assistance policies, the functioning of the council and the rights and duties enshrined in the Federal Constitution. In the plenary sessions of the council, manifestations were marked by a demand for equal rights. The feelings of *justice and injustice* are also very strong in this representation group, which makes them more active as militants. Reports revealed their participation beyond the council: this category of councilpeople has an active rapprochement with its representatives and is closely acquainted with the situation in which they live. They have trajectories involving social movements, neighborhood associations and social organizations, participation in neighborhood events and in assemblies organized by different instances of public administration, including the state legislative house.

For this category, *political efficacy* and *will to act collectively* are two very present dimensions: since they believe that people's union can transform reality, these counselors are confident that they can, through the collective, change what they perceive as wrong. They believe that the participation of the council members is important for COMASV to continue its role as an instrument of the maintenance and change of public policies and, consequently, of citizen's lives.

The other segment of representatives of civil society within COMASV, the *representatives of entities*, contributes with peculiarities that reflect a somewhat different participatory mold. These councilors do not limit their participation to actions involving the matters that formally concern them. They are involved in movements that seek improvements in the rights of those assisted by the organizations they represent. This is perceived when analyzing the *will to act collectively* dimension: representatives of entities see the work in the COMASV as collective and not individualized, although there are disagreements on this point. Participation in plenary sessions, questions and deliberations seek to meet the interests of all.

Within the council, participation is directly linked to the monitoring and maintenance of public policies that involve those assisted by the various entities registered in COMASV. More attention is given to individuals who have a greater connection with the entities that the councilpeople represent, such as: special children, the elderly, and the street population. Nevertheless, participation in the council is neither limited nor segmented. Here, the feeling of *collective identity* is not as significant as in *users' representatives*, appearing strong in a smaller number of councilors. Their participation is greater within the organizations they represent than within the council itself. This is justified by the obstacles present in the councils, whose consequence is a more satisfactory participation on the outside, where greater results can be achieved.

The third segment is comprised of *representatives of professionals*, for whom participation means contributing in a technical way to the activities carried out as part of the council's daily routine. Their participation takes place mainly within internal committees, in which they are assigned technical activities. Because they come from organizations that guide, supervise and discipline professional activities, these councilors have remarkable technical knowledge and contribute by participating in auxiliary activities. The interviews revealed, in this case, a lower degree of understanding of the policies that involve the assistance area in the municipality, as compared to other segments of councilors representing civil society. They justify this low level of information by the excess of work.

There is also their participation outside the council, where they act as aids in technical activities for nongovernmental organizations and other entities. Voluntary participation takes place during professional holidays, corroborating some of the perceptions discussed in the interviews, such as: feelings of *political efficacy* and *will to act collectively*.

Councilpeople have shown awareness of the importance of their participation and engagement with their constituencies, and seem to be motivated to fight for the rights of their respective categories. The connection between representatives and represented is made through the understanding of demands, and is based on the feeling of *collective identity* between users' and entities' representatives, and also on the sense of *social injustice*. However, the maintenance of links between these actors is difficult: representations often provide no feedback to their constituencies, due to the lack of interest of the represented parties themselves, since they disbelieve actions involving public policies of social assistance.

To sum up, the analysis of the participation of *civil society representatives* in COMASV, in light of Sandoval's political consciousness model, shows the motivations and types of feeling that permeate the behavior of civil actors in their council activities. Among the main motivations and factors that lead them to participate as councilpeople in COMASV, are the feeling

of *collective identity*, of belonging to the council and those represented, the feeling of *political efficacy*, which makes them perceive themselves as instruments of social change, and the *will to act collectively*, which attributes to the collective the possibility of achieving results.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Even though they have been created under a democratizing inspiration, social management councils face several difficulties in establishing themselves as spaces for effective dialogue between civil society and government. Without disregarding these aspects, the research that gave rise to this study has turned to a dimension not dealt with by the current council literature, that is, the political consciousness of the actors representing civil society in the council.

From this perspective, in the present case, our findings show that there are different configurations of political consciousness among the three types of actors that work in COSMAV. This is an expression of the actors' different ways of intervening in the scope of the council. Representatives of professionals have feelings of *justice and injustice* and *political efficacy* as conditions in the configuration of other dimensions, and participate in a limited way in the plenary sessions, thematic commissions and NGOs. Users' representatives have feelings of *collective identity*, *political efficacy* and *justice and injustice* as conditions for other feelings, and participate more comprehensively in social movements, neighborhood associations and the public administration, demanding actions in the social interest. Representatives of entities have feelings of *collective identity*, *political efficacy* and *antagonistic and adversarial interests* as conditions for the formation of other dimensions, and participate in social movements, actions toward the public power and movements involving those assisted by entities.

We emphasize that the adopted analytical perspective, by shifting its focus towards the actors and not the functional aspects of the council, brings important contributions that allow for a broadening of the knowledge regarding management councils. In public administration, particularly, these results may contribute to deepening the understanding of the relationship between public managers and councilpeople, since knowing the feelings the latter's participation may contribute to the formulation of adequate organizational and social strategies to support public policies. In addition, these results contribute to studies focused on the connections between actors representing civil society and the wider symbolic and cultural universe in which they practice their council activities.

In regard to this study's empirical contributions to support Sandoval's (2001) political consciousness model, two aspects merit further consideration: first, one must pay attention to the research environment to which the model is directed. For the purposes of this research, there was a need to analyze the feelings of *justice and injustice*, a departure from the updated model proposed by Sandoval and Silva (2016). This dimension, along with *collective identity*, reflects feelings that lead counselors to seek social change. Regarding the social assistance field, the initiative to participate is closely related to the dimension of collective identity, which conditions others, such as *will to act collectively* and *political effectiveness*. Furthermore, the combination of feelings related to *political efficacy* and *will to act collectively* contributes to actions aimed at social change. For councilors, social change can only occur when there is a spirit of communion among those involved. There was no need to eliminate any dimensions presented in the original model. When the object of study reveals situations in which the dimensions of *justice and injustice* are present, such as social policies, disregard these aspects would be ill-advised. In this case, we consider that the initial model, without adjustments, is more adequate (SANDOVAL, 2001), since feelings of *justice and injustice* constitute a fundamental dimension to understand how the other dimensions are configured. More precisely, it should be pointed out that conducting research on management councils based on the model of political consciousness necessarily implies observing how the *collective identity* dimension interferes in the construction and configuration of the other dimensions, considering that, in this work, this dimension was present in two categories of representation, conditioning the formation of the other dimensions.

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Arthur Gomes Dau

ORCID:<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4212-985X>

Master in Administration from the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), Vitória – ES, Brazil. E-mail: arthurgdau@gmail.com

Márcia Prezotti Palassi

ORCID:<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0751-6777>

PhD in Social Psychology from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP); Professor of the Administration Department and the Graduate Program in Administration of the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), Vitória – ES, Brazil. E-mail: mprezotti@hotmail.com

Marta Zorzal e Silva

ORCID:<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5622-5389>

PhD in Political Science from the University of São Paulo (USP); Professor of the Department of Social Sciences and the Graduate Program in Social Sciences of the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), Vitória – ES, Brazil. E-mail: mazorzal@gmail.com