

A CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE SOCIAL CONTROL OF SANITATION ACTIVITIES¹

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In 2007, the National Policy for Basic Sanitation (PNSB) was established when law 11.445 was sanctioned. It included among its principles universal access and popular or social participation.

However, popular participation, as established by law, constituted a dilemma in that the success of participative arenas to control government actions is dependent on the willingness of governments to be controlled. The institutionalization of popular participation in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution was the result of pressure by social movements and is linked to the furthering of democracy and citizenship (DAGNINO, 2004).

It is important to highlight that the water services sector is undergoing an important period in the implementation of a political project which has been in development for many years, involving many sectors of society, in particular, specialists in this area, company and municipal government representatives and scholars. However, as Rosenquist (2005) states, one of the greatest challenges is promoting popular participation/social control in a sector of such technical complexity and in which, in general, the population has little interest.

Despite the fact that social control mechanisms have not managed to meet initial expectations, these forums are essential spaces for furthering democracy (DAGNINO, TATAGIBA, 2007). In light of the above, the aim of this study is to contribute to the development of strategies to support the social control of sanitation activities by reflecting on the Brazilian context of developing democracy and citizenship within popular participation forums.

Qualitative methods based on documental research were employed in order to develop this article, making use of key words such as social control, popular participation, social participation and sanitation. The expressions “popular participation” and “social participation” are used because they refer to participation in social control arenas.

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This study sought to analyse information related to the social control of public policies in Brazil, in particular in the area of sanitation, in order to reveal how this subject was addressed and analyzed in previous studies.

As can be observed in Table 1, legislation related to social control and participative experiences which have already been adopted in the area of public health are analyzed by using both Raymundo Faoro's conceptions (2008 a; 2008 b; 1987) and other social science theories which address the issues of democracy and citizenship.

Table 1 Information obtained and official documentation employed

Information	Documentation
The context of social control actions in public policies in Brazil from the 1988 Federal Constitution onward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Federal Constitution. Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil - Law 8.142, 28 December 1990 - Law 11.445, 5 January 2007
Diagnosing sanitation social control support strategies	- Política e Plano de Saneamento Ambiental: experiências e recomendações [Environmental Sanitation Policy and Plan: Brasilia's experiences and recommendations]: Ministério das Cidades
Proposal for social participation from the drawing up of principles and directives of sanitation policies to the planning, follow up, execution and assessment of actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Termo de Referência para elaboração de Planos Municipais de Saneamento Básico/FUNASA [Terms of Reference for drafting Municipal Basic Sanitation Plans/ FUNASA] - Ministério das Cidades. Pan American Health Organization Política e Plano de Saneamento Ambiental: experiências e recomendações [Environmental Sanitation Policy and Plan: experiences and recommendations] - Brasília: - Ministério das Cidades. 2ª edição. - Política e Plano de Saneamento Ambiental: experiências e recomendações Brasília [Environmental Sanitation Policy and Plan: Brasilia's experiences and recommendations]: Ministério das Cidades

The analysis of the documentation gathered was conducted in order to detect potential problems and to analyse to what extent these problems have negatively impacted on the effectiveness of social control as an act of citizenship. Based on reflections on the experiences presented in the documentation, suggestions were put forward to advance social control strategies in sanitation.

Social control of public policies

The 1988 Federal Constitution was drafted without citing popular participation, but it met the populations' demands, amongst which we highlight participation in public policies.

The Constituição Cidadã (Citizen's Constitution, Federal Constitution/1988) guaranteed popular participation in public policies, as well as other forms of political participation. In this way, the Federal Government ensures the people's right to exercise social control over government actions. Examples are the National Health Policy which establishes councils that are deliberative, both in terms of their set up and operation, and the National Sanitation Policy (Federal Law 11.445), whose councils are not deliberative.

The fact that the latter participative bodies are not deliberative leads us to question how much autonomy they have in terms of development and structure, as well as their function. Lack of autonomy restricts the development of the people's capacity for association, limiting their ability to learn about citizenship.

However, knowledge and assessment of the performance of particular strategies can contribute both to the further development of these strategies and to spaces where citizenship can be exercised by, for example, formulating new strategies.

Despite existing problems, councils are considered to be spaces where community demands may be presented (BATISTA, MELO, 2011) and in this way they reiterate their "potential as instruments for democratization, power relationships and for developing policies" (CUNHA, 2007).

Generally speaking, society is becoming increasingly "de-politicized" with regard to public policies. This is a phenomenon which tends to lead to policy specialization rather than foster the social and political aspects of the decision-making process (IPEA [Institute of Applied Economic Research], 2010). A vicious circle exists in which administrative councils merely rubber stamp actions and decisions previously taken by administrators, thus centralizing and depoliticizing decision-making. Part of the fault lies in the very conception of these administrative councils which end up reiterating the segmentation of public policies (IPEA, 2010).

Another factor which contributes to the reduction of social control in participative arenas relates to the difficulty in accessing participation and information channels (BATISTA, MELO, 2011; CUNHA, 2007; GALVÃO JR, XIMENES, 2007; VAN STRALEN *et al.*, 2006). Problems also arise from the misuse of technical and scientific knowledge (BATISTA, MELO, 2011; CUNHA, 2007; GUIZARDI, PINHEIRO, 2006; VAN STRALEN *et al.*, 2006).

This situation neutralizes the political debate within Councils because the legitimacy of technical and scientific arguments tend to silence popular experiences and undermine the position of user representatives (BATISTA, MELO, (2011); CUNHA, (2007); VAN STRALEN *et al.* (2006)).

In these cases, it is arguable whether there is real access to information and the opportunity for learning skills that could promote not only knowledge acquisition, but also the development of an autonomous and critical attitude in society. Lack of knowledge

or specific training to participate in social control forums or, more broadly speaking, in politics, tends to weaken the position of the representatives of society and contributes to the asymmetric power relations observed in Municipal Councils for Health (CMS), (GUIZARDI e PINHEIRO, 2006).

The interests of particular sectors predominate over community needs (BATISTA, MELO, 2011), and in certain situations, the lack of compliance in relation to the Council's makeup can result in an increase in the influence of the power of specific sectors, such as the government and/or service providers (COTTA, CAZAL, MARTINS, 2010). These situations reveal the asymmetric power relations at the heart of these councils, weakening and bureaucratizing spaces for political deliberation, in addition to making them inaccessible to the population in general (COTTA *et al.*, 2010; GUIZARDI, PINHEIRO, 2006).

A widely discussed factor relates to the distance between user representatives and their bases. This state of affairs is demonstrated by the absence of electoral disputes, the fact that representatives are always the same (VAN STRALEN *et al.*, 2006) and that many councillors are nominated rather than elected (COTTA *et al.*, 2010).

The institutionalization of representation with regard to its function of potentially fostering social participation in social control forums must be considered in light of the level of associative culture in each region. Restricting participation to representatives can hinder the development of a real culture of association and participation.

It is worth noting the differences in the way community forums operate in small and medium-sized municipalities and in larger cities. In principle, councils initially developed in large cities and subsequently expanded into medium-sized towns, whilst keeping the same organizational structure (AVRITZER, 2009).

Difficulties in the way that councils work reflect aspects of the local culture, such as the organizational levels of the local civil society (AVRITZER, 2009); the political project of the local administration (AVRITZER, 2009; DAGNINO, 2004), as well as other aspects relating to the institutional structure of the model adopted. Avritzer (2009) argues that despite these difficulties, the effectiveness of participative actions is linked to the quality of a government's organization. The positive effects of participation will impact on access to education and health and on the management of these policy areas.

Social control strategies in sanitation

The sanitation sector sought to implement the National Policy for Basic Sanitation (PNSB) once it was sanctioned by Law 11.445 on 5 January 2007 and regulated by Decree n. 7.217 on 21 June 2010. The process of drafting the PNSB brought together a number of segments around the issue of sanitation, not only in terms of implementing infrastructure, but also in terms of health improvement.

The diffusion of funding sources and the fragmentation of policies, as well as the absence of central regulation in sanitation, makes social control difficult.

There are two forms of describing sanitation, one relating to health prevention and the other to health promotion. The second perspective understands sanitation to be a multi-dimensional intervention which takes place in the environment, taking into

account physical, social, economic, political and cultural aspects. In this perspective, the purpose of sanitation is to implement engineering systems associated to a set of integrated actions for improving health.

This study argues that the systems and associated actions must be considered in terms of their sustainability and adaptation to the general context in which they occur, seeking to bring together institutions and the population in order to empower them, whilst sharing responsibility for actions and activities with other technical sectors (SOUZA *et al.*, 2007).

Laporte (2000) argues that conceiving sanitation in terms of health promotion involves a broader vision of these actions, enabling the incorporation of subjective aspects, linking sanitation to issues affecting both the body and space. This is because cleaning the environment to promote health involves human/space, human/body relations with the world and with the representations human beings construct of their situation in society.

From this point of view, it is hoped that the population can participate in the planning, implementing and upkeep of sanitation activities, so that the community can own both these and health-related actions, and in this way contribute to their effectiveness and sustainability.

Technical-scientific knowledge is extremely important but it is not sufficient. Participation is also the consequence of a collective empowering process where individuals and the community as a whole are able to understand mechanisms and processes (giving opinions, contributing, agreeing and disagreeing) based on knowledge, experience and information acquired through their daily practices (SOUZA, FREITAS, 2009). Nevertheless, Souza and Freitas also argue that popular participation in sanitation can be self-fulfilling in terms of health promotion, the empowerment of society and the collective construction of a common good: health. The act of implementing infrastructure alone does not guarantee its appropriate use and upkeep. Thus, by developing sanitation activities together, all actors can become specialists, including the population itself.

Other important aspects for health promotion associated to sanitation and the promotion of social control are the environmental and health educational actions which have been conducted by the National Health Foundation (FUNASA) since 1999, and by the National Department for Environmental Sanitation (SNSA), part of the Ministry of Cities (MCidades), since 2005. These actions aim to mobilize users to exercise social control. This includes participating in planning, monitoring and management assessment, in order to ensure a commitment toward the appropriate use of services provided (MOISÉS, 2010).

The PNSB has ushered in new principles and objectives and stimulated new and more inclusive practices, guaranteeing social control. Popular participation was more clearly defined with the institutionalization of the need to draw up Basic Sanitation Municipal Plans (PMSBs) in all municipalities so they are better equipped to secure funding for this sector. However, as Heller (2009) argues, the PMSBs did not lead to significant changes regarding the role of the Federal Government.

PMSBs have been established with funding from FUNASA and the Ministry of Cities. Both organizations have guidelines for drawing up Sanitation Plans in which the

involvement of society is central. The aim is to transform this document into legislation and, in this way, ensure the empowerment of the population, thus providing them with a formal mechanism to claim their rights (BRASIL, 2006).

The aim of the PMSBs is to develop mechanisms to manage the municipality's infrastructure, based on the four axes of basic sanitation: water supply, sewage services, solid waste management and rain water management, taking into account factors such as "establishing mechanisms and procedures to ensure the effective participation of society at all stages of the PMSB process, from drafting to approval, execution, assessment and review (BRASIL, 2012)."

The Ministry of Cities prepared a *Guide for Drafting Basic Sanitation Municipal Plans*, where it sets out criteria and concepts which, when applied to the peculiarities of each municipality, can facilitate the task of planning basic sanitation systems.

Despite the fact that this document does not recommend drafting a social mobilization plan as a development stage, it stresses the importance of popular participation across the entire process and suggests a participation scale and a number of criteria to take into account. Thus, the FUNASA guidelines point to greater flexibility in the way these actions should be executed.

Generally speaking, a number of principles steer the development of PMSBs, such as the promotion of social involvement through establishing means to access information and participation, raising awareness and encouraging self-management by the population; health and environmental promotion in order to develop both individual and collective awareness, as well as promoting a more harmonious relationship between human beings and the environment, in addition to technological information.

Given the different experiences of social control in sanitation and the development of PMSBs in general, the local political environment, cultural preferences and local habits (particularly with regard to personal cleaning habits and the relationship with space) must be considered. Discussion on available and viable technologies is also important. It is essential to ensure the development of measures which are flexible and can be easily disseminated, as part of an interdisciplinary network to provide support to adopted strategies in order to improve their effectiveness.

The successful implementation of both the PNSB and the PMSBs represent great challenges to Brazilian society, because of the visible change in perspective they represent. There is no doubt that each experience increases the pool of knowledge, and despite failures and obstacles, they form part of a process of learning and citizenship development where advances and setbacks are to be expected.

In the *Guide for Drafting Basic Municipal Sanitation Plans*, Bernardes *et al.* (BRASIL, 2006) developed a hierarchical classification model similar to Arnstein's (1969) which includes seven participation levels, varying according to the degree to which the community is involved.

When HELLER *et al.* (2007) analyzed the participation models proposed by Arnstein (1969) and Bernardes *et al.*, (BRASIL, 2006), they observed that these models corresponded to the initial stage of the participative process when the population is only informed of events. Information is thus described as unidirectional participation. Progress

in terms of participation is characterized by an increase in influence in the decision-making process, which can evolve to the point where power is transferred to the population who become responsible for decision-making and even implementation.

However, the use of a hierarchical conception to assess participative processes disregards the lack of continuity which is inherent to these processes. There are advances and setbacks which are an intrinsic part of the political and cultural dynamics of particular places. This model therefore supposes an ascending scale of participative processes. However, this process is best represented by a spiral pattern.

It has also been argued that assessment of these processes should happen within a broader time frame which can encompass other elements in addition to the evaluation of mobilization strategies, so that effects can be observed in the short, medium and long-term.

Strengthening social participation in sanitation

The effectiveness of the social control of sanitation implies a permanent learning process. Experiences accumulated from other areas and the trajectory of the Brazilian sanitation sector leads us to highlight certain issues.

Galvão Jr and Ximenes (2007) argue that sectorial municipal councils and similar bodies can be efficient mechanisms for exercising social control and providing support for the regulation of water and sewage services. They also argue that it is important to consider the fact that, according to Law 11.445/2007, councils should have a consultative nature. Any lack of empowerment may leave these arenas discredited and powerless. Mello (2009) states that this mechanism could even make participation in the process of implementing PMSBs more difficult.

Despite the fact that the institutionalization of participation is seen as essential to the effectiveness of the system (JOURALEV, 2007), it is possible to question the amount of control left in the hands of governments. The fact that participation is associated to civil society organizations and that the council is consultative in nature may not only demotivate participation but also weaken social mobilization by establishing the need for specific and topical organizations.

Thus, given the different levels of association in different places, it is argued that there is potential for individual participation (independent from representative bodies). It is also important to value spaces where people naturally come together and which foster association and the creation of a common project in communities. In this way, it would be possible to overcome the lack of community interest in councils (GERSCHMAN, 2004).

Setting up mechanisms or procedures for popular participation in the regulatory process does not in itself guarantee effective participation. It is important to focus on the social conditions which limit participation. Furthermore, the cost of exercising social control also contributes to a natural tendency to delegate to the government the control of public administration. It is important to note that there are few incentives for civil society to exert social control (BUGARIN, 2003).

A factor which is particularly relevant for promoting social control in the sanitation sector is the non-technification of the discourse.

The debate around technical options is a constant theme in the sanitation field, given that these actions impact, not only on human health, but also on the environment. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss environmental sustainability.

Generally speaking, another criticism is the fact that the social control of governmental actions by the population is usually granted by the government itself, adhering to a topical and fragmented conception, strongly influenced by the technification of knowledge to the detriment of inter-disciplinarity. Once again, this leads to the exclusion of the population from the process.

The current model relies on the local political project and on representatives from organized civil society groups in councils divided into specific topics. It is important to note that these factors may limit social mobilization.

Thus, this study proposes that the technical team involved in sanitation and the elaboration of PMSBs construct spaces for discussion and value community knowledge. This can be achieved by using appropriate methodologies, such as developing intervention techniques which take into account the knowledge of the community and its demands.

It is important to adopt a cross-sectorial approach involving sectors such as basic sanitation and health, the environment and urban planning, given there is a need to integrate these actions. In addition, it is important to note that at the local level the population does not distinguish between different subject areas. Therefore, as HELLER *et al.* (2007) argue, the fragmentation of the State's organization leads to a fragmentation of popular participation.

When discussing social control mechanisms in practice, the capacity building of social actors and the availability of information should always be to the fore. Carvalho (2002) claims that according to T. A. Marshall, popular education is a social right, which is generally attained after civil and political rights have been achieved. However, it is also a prerequisite for the attainment of other social rights. Jouralev (2007) recommends investing in the training and education of the population.

Thus, it is reasonable to question the role of education in the social control of public policies, given that individuals are duty bound to know the law without, however, enjoying the conditions for this to be the case. It is argued that educational strategies are developed with regard to public policies so as to promote a reflection on the rights and duties of citizens.

The development of social control in sanitation is a challenge for society. This is because, in addition to the common difficulties attributed to policies already implemented, social control also involves debates around technical issues, a subject area that is immersed in cultural specificities. It is important to ask whether it is possible to promote health through sanitation without the community claiming its benefits.

The way in which the community addresses the issue of sanitation is linked to the way it relates to its environment and how its members care for their own bodies, where the body and the city are highly symbolic elements within specific cultural networks. The ownership of sanitation actions is doubtless a great challenge for society and is linked to the ownership of the city space and public health.

The points mentioned above lead us to reflect on the ambiguous nature of the

expression “social control” and to what extent its institutionalization and the consequent formalization of these strategies in Brazil have helped society to exert control over the State.

The institutionalization of these sectors may have happened because the state granted people this right before popular movements became strong enough to make do without formal recognition.

It is worth questioning the purpose of the institutionalization of popular participation in Brazil, given that, as Gohn (2011) argues, this is a contradictory process. On the one hand, new relations and opportunities are set up, and democratic spaces are consolidated. On the other hand, they affect the forms of popular organization and how demands are taken forward and influence outcomes for the different sectors of organized civil society which participate in these processes.

Therefore, consolidating social control strategies requires the constant search for means of exercising the counter-control of power in Brazilian society. In addition, it is important to include qualitative analyses which consider the social-political context at different levels (HELLER *et al.* 2007). Finally, there should be greater exchange of experiences between the different sectors which have developed strategies for social control, bringing benefits and strengthening these activities in the sanitation sector.

Final considerations

By studying social control strategies in Brazil in the last decades, it is possible to make the following considerations:

- It is important to be aware of the characteristics of each place, including historical, political and geographical elements, levels of association, the political project of the local government, as well as the national context. In addition, it is important to take into account flexibility when drawing up popular mobilization strategies. The fact that social control is guaranteed by the Constitution does not mean it will be put in practice.
- The use of techniques which prioritize the demands and knowledge of communities without being limited to specific topics promotes the involvement of unusual and diverse sectors of society in debates around sanitation issues. Sanitation is part of people’s daily lives and is inherently related to other areas, including leisure, health and education. An interdisciplinary approach emerges from real facts and demands to which pertinent and specific technical contributions can be integrated.
- Subjective aspects relating to sanitation must be taken into account.
- Fostering educational projects related to social participation in public policies is an element which can positively impact on the quality of participation and strengthen citizenship. The educational process pointed to here is not limited to formal education spaces, but includes understanding that learning is constantly taking place through daily experiences.

- Social participation must take place right across the process of basic sanitation from drafting principles and directives, to the planning, monitoring, execution and the assessment of actions. Given the above, it is important to highlight that participation processes must be subjected to different forms of qualitative assessments.

Raymundo Faoro's conceptions point to the fact that civil society must gather around a common good, regardless of the sector involved, thus empowering Brazilian society. Indeed, it can be concluded that the process of developing a culture of collective association must be based on the resources of the population themselves, and allow for the flexibility and peculiarities present in each place.

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A CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE SOCIAL CONTROL OF SANITATION ACTIVITIES

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Resumo: Este trabalho objetivou contribuir para a construção de estratégias de suporte ao controle social em ações de saneamento, por meio da realização de pesquisas que reuniram experiências de estratégias de controle social em políticas públicas consolidadas e em saneamento e analisou-as à luz do pensamento de Raymundo Faoro, e outros teóricos das ciências sociais que trabalharam o controle social e os temas correlatos. Como resultados diagnosticou-se a ascendência do poder executivo nas instâncias participativas, a falta de estrutura e subsídio para a participação da comunidade, tendência à tecnificação do discurso nas políticas públicas, ausência de educação para a cidadania e fragmentação das políticas públicas. Concluindo-se que se faz necessário: flexibilizar as estratégias para adaptá-las aos contextos locais; promover a participação dos cidadãos; construir redes interdisciplinares na implementação de ações de saneamento; utilizar metodologias que acessem a demanda e o conhecimento popular, e a inclusão de avaliação qualitativa do processo.

Palavras Chave: Controle social; Saneamento; Participação popular; Participação social.

Abstract: This study aims to contribute to the development of strategies to support the social control of sanitation actions. The current research is based on experiences of social control strategies related to sanitation and policies in other more consolidated sectors, analyzed here in light of the theories of Raymundo Faoro and other social scientists who study social control and related topics. Findings revealed a growing involvement of the executive in participatory bodies, a lack of infrastructure and subsidies for community participation, a tendency toward the technification of the discourse on public policy, an absence of citizenship education, as well as the fragmentation of public policies. The study concludes that it is essential to prioritize flexible strategies which can be adapted to local contexts; to promote citizen participation; to develop interdisciplinary networks for the implementation of sanitation; and to use methodologies which take into account popular demands and knowledge. Furthermore, it is important to implement a process for the qualitative evaluation of these strategies.

Key Words: Social Control; Sanitation; Popular Participation; Social Participation.

Resumen: Este estudio ha objetivado contribuir a las estrategias de construcción al control social en las acciones de saneamiento, mediante investigación que reunió las experiencias de estrategias de control social en las declaraciones de política pública y de saneamiento y analizados a la luz de Raymundo Faoro, y otros teóricos de las ciencias sociales. Como resultados se diagnosticó predominio del poder ejecutivo en los órganos de participación, la falta de infraestructura y de subvenciones para la participación comunitaria, la tecnificación del discurso como tendencia en las políticas públicas, ausencia de educación para la ciudadanía y la fragmentación de las políticas públicas. Concluyéndose ser necesario: estrategias flexibles para adaptarse a los contextos locales, promocionar la participación ciudadana, la construcción de redes interdisciplinarias en la aplicación de las acciones de saneamiento, utilizando metodologías que oportunicen el acceso a la demanda popular y el conocimiento, y la inclusión de la evaluación cualitativa del proceso.

Palabras Clave: Control social; Saneamiento; Participación popular; Participación social.
