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## Bureaucracy, Civil Society and Ideology in Latin America


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# **Bureaucracy, Civil Society and Ideology in Latin America**

**Grazielli Faria Zimmer Santos & Paula Chies Schommer\***

**Abstract.** This essay analyzes how political and ideological changes affect public bureaucracy and its relationship with civil society regarding different strategies of openness to participation. We suggest a theoretical-conceptual framework to discuss aspects of the political situation in Latin America. First, we discuss the changes that occurred over time, in the state-civil society relationship, which strengthen the latter and amplify a discourse for more participatory democracy. The focus is the role of the public bureaucracy in mediating the relations among the several actors in society, and we examine the way different political and ideological strands influence how open to participation the bureaucracy is in different periods. The literature review indicates two trends in the state-civil society relationship: technocrat and popular. These reflect the two main ideologies affecting the behavior of public bureaucrats when it comes to participation. We argue that in Latin America, although there is a swing around two different old-fashioned ideologies, both of them reinforce the centrality of the state and its bureaucracy. Therefore, dominant ideologies are not helpful in responding to the need for a deeper state-society re-articulation, which indicates the need and the possibility of building a new ideological approach.

**Key words:** Bureaucracy, Civil Society, Ideology, State-Society Relationship.

## **Burocracia, sociedad civil e ideología en América Latina**

**Resumen.** Analizamos de qué manera los cambios político-ideológicos afectan la burocracia pública en su relación con la sociedad civil en términos de diferentes estrategias de apertura a la participación. Sugerimos una base teórico-conceptual para discutir aspectos de la situación política de América Latina. Primero discutimos los cambios que han acontecido en la relación entre el Estado y la sociedad civil, los cuales llevaron al fortalecimiento de la última y a un discurso de mayor democratización del Estado. Discutimos el papel de la burocracia pública en la mediación de la relación entre los actores y la forma como la influencia de diferentes vertientes político-ideológicas pueden asociarse a períodos de mayor o menor apertura de la burocracia. La literatura indica dos tendencias en la relación entre Estado y sociedad civil que denota las dos principales bases ideológicas que afectan el comportamiento de la burocracia pública en lo que se refiere a la participación. Sin embargo, presenciamos en América Latina la oscilación entre diferentes concepciones ideológicas que refuerzan la centralidad de la burocracia estatal. Las ideologías dominantes ofrecen pocas respuestas a la necesidad de una rearticulación más profunda de las relaciones con la sociedad civil, lo que señala la necesidad y la posibilidad de construir una nueva concepción ideológica.

**Palabras clave:** Burocracia, Sociedad Civil, Ideología, Relaciones Estado-Sociedad.

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## 1. Introduction

The tension between the state and politics questions the state's centrality in the public sphere (Cunill Grau, 1996). The discussion about the state's legitimacy, as well as the theoretical and political debate on its role (especially regarding the effectiveness of its isolated action), present several new sociocultural actors and social movements seeking to act in the public sphere (Calderón and Reyna, 1990; Cohen and Arato, 1992). In this context, it is crucial to re-organize the institutional relations between the state and civil society (Heidemann, 2009), emphasizing the role of the citizen in public affairs.

The state-civil society relationship is subject to the mediation of the public bureaucracy. Therefore, democratizing the state implies in strategies to build a more participatory public bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy expresses an ideology of domination and power (Tragtenberg, 1980; Prestes Motta and Bresser Pereira, 1991). The typical organizational model of modern times (Clegg, 1990) is characterized by hierarchy, impersonality, and neutrality of its agents, the bureaucrats. However, instead of neutrality, the various sectors of the public bureaucracy could be understood as parties in the political debate (Cardoso, 1975). Based on different ideological conceptions, they are linked to different interests and social groups –often defending their corporatist interests (Abrucio, 2007). Sometimes they take the responsibility to recognize the inequities existing in society and to stand and act in favor of equity (World Health Organization, 2011).

Society –in a multicentric conception– consists of a variety of enclaves, organized in a balanced way, “where human beings engage in substantive activities, in truly integrative and different ways” (Ramos, 1981, p. 140). The various processes and spheres in which human beings participate include civil society (understood here as a group of politically organized communities) and its interfaces with the market and the state.

In recent decades, in Latin American countries, different patterns of the state-society relationships mediated by the bureaucracy have been observed. Considering the advances and setbacks, innovations and traditions identified in these relationships throughout time, it is possible to recognize that there are different political and ideological strands associated with them.

This essay analyzes how significant political and ideological changes affect the public bureaucracy and its relationship with civil society, regarding strategies of openness to participation. We carry out a narrative literature review on the subject, focusing on Latin America. The narrative literature review is usually selective and influenced by the subjective perception of the researcher. It does not involve a systematic search of the literature nor a specific methodology that can be reproduced (Paré; Trudel; Jaana; Kitsiou, 2015). The purpose is to provide an overview of the topic from the main authors (Rother, 2007). The essay is based on works from relevant authors in Latin America and on empirical research in the field.

This paper begins by presenting changes that occurred over time in the state-society relationship, especially regarding the process of strengthening the latter. Then, we discuss the role of the public bureaucracy in coordinating the actors in the public sphere, considering the influence of different political and ideological strands. Finally,

the debate present in the narrative literature review is contrasted with historical aspects of the process of democratization in Latin America, resulting in elements that help to understand the current political scenario and trends for the future.

## **2. State-civil society relationship**

The delimitation of social systems presented by Ramos (1981) emphasizes that human beings –as multidimensional beings– need multiple spaces of life in which to perform symbolic interaction, to reach the full potential of their existence (Salm, 2015; Stout and Love, 2015). The “multicentric society” is constituted of a variety of enclaves, which organize themselves in a balanced way (Ramos, 1981).

Civil society is a legitimate sphere in the social system. It is part of an integrative process, which also includes interactions with the market and the state (Ramos, 1981). The state-civil society relationship should not be considered as two spheres overlapping. Both are equally legitimate. The politically organized communities which constitute civil society are parts of an interconnected multicentric society.

Over time, civil society has strengthened in search of greater balance in its relationship with other spheres that make up social systems, especially with the state.

While the market is presented as the main mechanism of economic coordination and appropriation of surplus, there is no clear distinction between the public and private spheres, and there is little room to explore the state-civil society relationship. This occurs either in pre-capitalist or capitalist forms of production (Hirschman, 1977). Salm (2015) observes that in societies marked by the market paradigm, people move away from the public sphere, which distances them from this space of political articulation (Arendt, 2013; Stivers, 2010).

When the distinctions between the public and the private sphere, state and market, and state and civil society become evident, there are challenges to be faced. The first, according Bresser-Pereira (1999, p.167), is the “construction and consolidation of the national state in the face of a fragmented and oligarchic society”. Once the national state is consolidated and strengthened as a mechanism of political and economic coordination, the reforms that take place in the public administration tend to be controlled by the oligarchic elites. These elites include aristocrats and religious leaders, who take control of the state and impose their interest on the rest of society. The state gains strength and power as it overcomes the resistance of societies (Migdal, 1988). The bureaucrats exercise this power, influenced by different ideologies and groups, and pursuing their own interests (Abrucio, 2007).

Since the 1970s, however, new sociopolitical features challenge the centrality of the state in the public sphere, reinforcing claims for a deeper re-articulation between state and society, highlighting the role of the latter and promoting a more balanced power relationship (Cunill Grau, 1996). These new features are related to factors such as: the fiscal crisis of the state; the crisis of the welfare state; geopolitical changes after the Cold War; the development of liberal capitalism and the strengthening of market power; the emergence of new social movements, in parallel with social disintegration expressed mainly by the concentration of income; and the loss of legitimacy of traditional political institutions (Cunill Grau, 1996; Bresser-Pereira, 1999; Dryzek, 1996; Crandall, 2008). Also, the context shows a growth in education levels, and increasing access to information and channels of expression and action, which are elements that contribute to the desire for participation and allow people to be more involved (in different ways) in the public sphere.

This diversification contributes to the recognition that, however efficient and responsive the state and the market are, they do not replace other enclaves (or dimensions) of human life of a different nature (Ramos, 1981).

The fiscal crisis and the crisis of the welfare state are associated with the state's excessive and distorted growth, when taking responsibility for the provision of services that could be provided by the market or the third sector (Bresser-Pereira, 1999; Costa, 2008; Abrucio, 2007). The growth of the welfare state, the increasing demands from society, and the vulnerability of the state to the risk of being captured by specific interests, all of this reduced its capacity to be responsive to the increasing demands (Lechner, 1996). This scenario contributes to strengthening the actors who resist state interference in issues that are related to private business and community life, as well as moral issues. The evidence that the state (or the market substituting the state) would not be able to deal with the paradoxical situation of rising expectations and decreasing legitimacy is an opportunity for the consolidation of new actors and interactions among them.

These different social processes have also brought a new way of understanding civil society as a set of politically organized communities, a sphere distinct from the state and the market, even though connected to them (Arato, 1981; Keane, 1988; Habermas, 1995; Avritzer, 2012). Civil society refers to movements that are different from the actors coordinating economic activity, who have strictly rational and financial objectives. It is also different from formally structured and bureaucratically organized institutions, whose central focus is the maintenance of power (Cohen and Arato, 1992). Civil society is related "to the institutional level of a world of life, understood as a place of socialization, social interaction, and public activities" (Avritzer, 2012, p. 384).

This enclave is fundamental for the exercise of human multidimensionality, notably in its political and social aspects (Dryzek, 1996; França Filho, 2010). This new positioning of civil society, parallel to the emergence of new sociocultural actors and social movements, enables the questioning of other fundamental aspects of the construction of a democratic system.

The first aspect concerns the relative de-legitimization of the state and political institutions, resulting from two tendencies aimed at restricting the space of politics, considered hitherto excessive. Both the revalorization of the secularization of politics and the request for realism draw attention to the fact that order should not be understood as an objective reality, but as a social production. As such, it cannot be the work of a single actor, the state (Cunill Grau, 1996). The centrality of the state, of the parties and the politics becomes relativized. The understanding of the political space as synonymous with the public sphere is no longer accepted (Lechner, 1986). Just as refusing to exclude or enclose politics, it is not accepted that the state occupies all spaces.

The second aspect is the fact that, despite technological progress and rising living standards (e.g. life expectation, education, and sanitary and consumption conditions), poverty and income concentration have not been overcome (Bresser-Pereira, 1999). There is resentment over social injustice and privilege and for social movements that fight not only for their political rights. Movements seek to consolidate an institutional conflict capable of expressing their demands, particularly to defend minorities (Calderón and Reyna, 1990) and fight against inequalities and threats to human rights.

Finally, the advances and setbacks in democracy development reinforce the need for a better relationship between the state and society. Democracy goes beyond its classical indicators such as the electoral processes and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture and civil liberties (The

Economist Democracy Index, 2018). It refers to the multiple ways citizens engage in their community, including the processes of deliberating and communicating in the public sphere (Dryzek, 1996), observing that community life is fundamental for human development.

In sum, while national states are configured as absolute monarchies or as oligarchic political systems, it is the state that asserts over civil society. Civil society, even though emerging as a relevant political player, is sometimes dependent on the initiative of the state or on elites that exercise control over society (Bresser-Pereira, 1999). When democratic political systems begin to consolidate, the state, to a greater or lesser degree, begins to open and institutionalize participation strategies, causing interweaving between the spheres.

However, even with the strengthening of civil society, the consolidation of the participation instruments in the public space, as well as the broader and real restructuring of its relations with the state, are mediated by public bureaucracy. This presents different configurations, depending on the ideological bias it assumes, which directly reflects the way in which the strategies of participation and openness of the state are presented and conducted.

### **3. The role of public bureaucracy and its different ideological positions on participation**

Bureaucracy can be considered as a social system of domination or power (Weber, 1948; Tragtenberg, 1980), the typical organizational model of the modern times (Clegg, 1990), an ideology, or a social group (the bureaucrats). It became part of daily life and a fundamental characteristic of mass society.

As a result of the consolidation of instrumental-legal rationality, bureaucracy is presented by Weber (1948) as an instrument of incomparable technical superiority, mainly due to the characteristics of the division of power and work in organizations.

These characteristics constitute what Weber calls an “ideal type,” a conceptually pure type created for sociological purposes, which partially represents the reality (Weber, 1991). Voegelin (1963) argues that all ideal systems degrade or transform during their implementation, and result different from the ideal conception or the general expectations. Some factors are out of control, though guided by an ideal model. Bureaucracy is no different. It is the human element that transforms bureaucracy from something abstract to reality, and the human action is influenced by factors that the abstract model cannot fully foresee. On the other hand, it is also the human factor that transforms bureaucracy reality into abstraction, that is, it defines an abstract image about an observed phenomenon, although it does not sufficiently correspond to reality.

The characteristics of existing bureaucracies vary according to different contexts. The neutrality and impersonality of public agents, in particular, are very limited in the daily life of public organizations, showing their permeability to ideological concepts and different values.

The bureaucracy itself arises from a specific ideology: domination. Whether as a social group or as a form of social organization, bureaucracy is always a system of domination or power, which claims the monopoly of rationality and knowledge. Tragtenberg (1980) points out that bureaucracy is not merely a technical phenomenon, but is, above all, a phenomenon of domination. It presents itself as an organization that “grants to those who control it an immense portion of power” and reinforces an ideology of domination in different forms (Motta and Bresser-Pereira, 1991, p. 10). That is, there are more flexible or more rigid bureaucratic organizations, they can get more or

less formal or authoritarian, but all are bureaucratic organizations insofar as they seek the concentration of power.

In addition to the ideological influence that gives legitimacy to bureaucracy as a form of domination, the bureaucratic body, as a social group or class, presents itself as an actor susceptible to the influence of different ideological strands. Public administration (made up of bureaucrats) is itself a critical political actor who sometimes has more power than parties and lobby groups in shaping government policies (Skocpol, 1985). Although the argued importance of separating the administrative apparatus from ideological or “particularist” influences in order to ensure stability to the implementation of public policies –which would be the main reason for the existence of a career in public service– this is not usually the reality (Cunill Grau, 2004). Also, different segments of the public bureaucracy articulate internally to defend corporate interests. Matching these interests often imply in granting privileges to a segment of bureaucracy in detriment to others, and in detriment to workers in the market and society in general (Abrucio, 2007).

As Cardoso (1975) observes, the hypothesis of the existence of a bureaucratic and technocratic neutral power is confronted with the alternative of understanding the public bureaucracy as groups in political struggle, groups that are linked to different interests, depending on their ideological bases. This relationship takes the form of crossed rings, which represent the different interests that come to exist within the state structure itself, from the links between the bureaucrats and the social segments with which they articulate and are influenced by their ideas and values.

It is essential to bear in mind that the state-civil society relationship occurs in this scenario. More specifically, the literature indicates two tendencies in the state-civil society relationship, or two main ideologies affecting the behavior of public bureaucracy when it comes to participation (Cardoso, 1975 and 1979; Cunill Grau, 1996). One is characterized by a demobilizing regime of actors outside the state and, therefore, implies a more closed bureaucracy. The other is the mobilization of the community and its engagement, indicating a more open bureaucracy.

The first, based on a *technocratic ideology*, considers the state as the main and agglutinating hub, acting in isolation for the common good. Trusting in its technical qualification, the public bureaucracy is closed to society. The state is identified with the bureaucratic apparatus, especially with its economic role, without contemplating other dimensions (Abrucio and Loureiro, 2005). Often under the pretext of depoliticizing the economy, the state is reorganized around its efficiency. Efficiency is valued as something superior to democracy itself (Denhardt, 2011), which is seen as hindering growth and economic stability. Politics and politicians are viewed with suspicion and citizens as limited or incapable of making good decisions (Abrucio and Loureiro, 2005; Behn, 1998). This hides the diversity of interests (García Delgado, 1994; Lechner, 1996).

The state can play an active role in the development, by planning, financing, as well as acting as a business player by producing goods and services on a large scale (Abrucio and Loureiro, 2018).

Even if there are declarations in favor of participation, in practice it tends not to be complete (Navarro, 1993). The existence of channels of participation does not mean a real capacity for the various community segments to intervene, and this may delegitimize these channels. Guizardi (2009) observes that participation tends to be curtailed, considering that presence of the community, in quantitative terms, even if guaranteed by the legal requirement for parity, does not mean an equivalent capacity of intervention.

Figure 1 represents this tendency, showing that the pressures upon the public bureaucracy do not alter its form and it keeps exercising power over society. At the same time, it is possible to observe groups that are connected to each other and located inside and outside public bureaucracy, acting to influence its power of action in society.

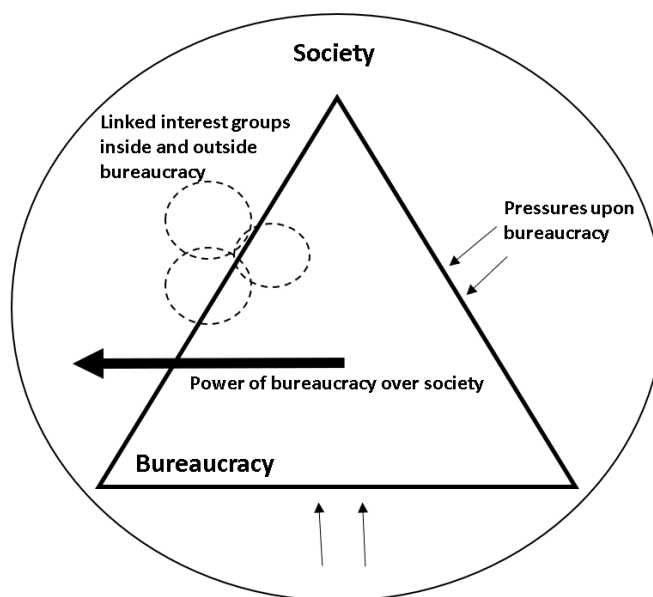


Figure 1: Public bureaucracy and the technocratic ideology  
Source: Elaborated by the authors

The second tendency (Figure 2) is based on *popular ideology* and considers civil society as one of the bases of power. It assumes a public bureaucracy open to citizen participation, counting on strategies of direct participation. It does not mean that increasing participation is a decision of the public bureaucracy alone, it is usually a result of political and social pressures, supported by certain groups inside the bureaucracy. The state still has an active role in defining the strategies for participation and provision of public goods and services. There is an intention of re-activating the community, but the bureaucracy itself still sets the rules of how this process takes place. There is usually a clear distinction between the decision-making and the implementation stages. It is up to citizens to participate in the decisions with the technicians and political representatives. The state apparatus is responsible for the implementation of what is decided, and the public bureaucracy is permeable to civil society influences through mechanisms of direct participation. The openness of public bureaucracy legitimizes the exercise of its power over society and the interest groups continue to exist, inside and outside the bureaucracy.



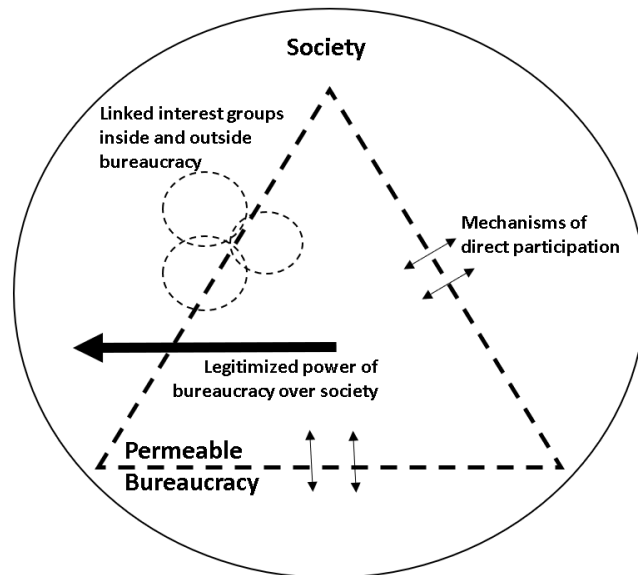


Figure 2: Public bureaucracy and the popular ideology  
 Source: Elaborated by the authors

Thus, although there is a polarization between different political and ideological strands and between how the strategies of participation and engagement of civil society are conducted, both strands reinforce the role of the state bureaucracy as the main actor.

Unexpectedly in a multicentric society, there is a predominance of one actor over the others, restricting the domains of politics. This ends up strengthening the very ideology of domination in which bureaucracy is based, giving it ever greater power, weakening democracy. The popular ideology, although bringing in its narrative elements related to the strengthening of people and participation in public decision-making, does not necessarily present itself as a response to the need for deeper re-articulation between the state and civil society.

This ideological polarization, strongly marked by the presence of the state as a fundamental actor, although present in different contexts, is especially characteristic of the Latin American context, even in periods of democratization.

#### 4. Latin American context

According to Germani's (1966) framework of political development analysis, until the 1960s the different political situations in Latin America were seen as stages in a transition from restricted democracy to an enlarged democracy, with full society participation (Cardoso, 1979). The expectation was a transition from patterns characteristic of traditional society to patterns related to modern society, a process that all Latin American countries would go through. However, when space was opened for more extended forms of democracy, restrictive and authoritarian regimes emerged again.

The beginning of the 1970s was marked by the end of the just born representative democracy in Latin America. Democracy, as a political organization, was only occasional and not more than a trend. In this period, along with the consolidation of restrictive regimes, a widespread belief was that freedom and popular participation in the political process hindered, or even stopped, accelerated economic growth. In this

way, groups that took over the state power began to define –based on the isolated capacity of the public bureaucracy– the possibilities and strategies of development (Costa, 2008). As Cardoso (1979) observed, these groups resolved conflicts by controlling and reducing the level of information to increase the apathy of the population as a whole. Meanwhile, they replaced institutional flexibility, capable of integrating the masses, using manipulative mechanisms that reduced social mobilization to symbolic participation, which are characteristics of a technocratic ideology.

According to Smith and Ziegler (2009), during the period 1978-2004 (the third and final cycle of democratization in Latin America), the transitions between different types of political regimes were marked by “illiberal” democracy. Free and fair elections combined with partial but systematic repression of citizen rights became the dominant and defining trend. “According to a broad variety of measures –a number of countries, shares of population, percentages of total country-years– illiberal democracy has reigned supreme” (Smith and Ziegler, 2009, p. 374).

For Cardoso (1993), when the re-democratization of the Latin American countries started in the 1980’s, the characteristics of the technocratic political and ideological strand remained. In many countries, such as Brazil, the process of re-democratization was conducted by the same groups and alliances that controlled the restrictive regimes.

Some strategies were created to increase participation when groups of a popular political and ideological strand took some level of control of the public bureaucracy. These groups stressed the importance of strengthening and engaging civil society, but the bureaucrats kept the control over the strategies adopted.

It should also be noted that some of the control groups of the public bureaucracy change periodically. In Latin America, this means an interchange between different political and ideological strands and between periods characterized by a greater and lesser openness of the bureaucracy. Existing participation strategies, whether constitutional or not, are under constant threat even though they represent advances regarding the increase of civil society participation. There is a risk of them becoming extinct or de-characterized, reduced to mere formalism, which would impair their effectiveness and generate discredit to citizen participation and democracy.

The Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 and the Political Constitution of Colombia of 1991, for instance, constitute milestones of democratization in these countries. Both contemplate institutional mechanisms of participation, which result in political struggles and achievements. Among them, the public hearings, the public policy councils and conferences in Brazil (Pogrebinschi and Tanscheit, 2017), and the Territorial Planning Councils in Colombia (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2016). Since then, new mechanisms have been introduced to improve the legal framework and mechanisms that seek to guarantee representation and direct participation of citizens in the planning and monitoring of public policies in a sector or territory, as well as public policies on development (Dahmer, 2014). Many of these mechanisms have represented a democratic achievement and have had effects on the quality of policies and the provision of services. But they are often only formal, adopted to meet legal requirements for access to resources or to legitimize the actions of the public bureaucracy. The way they operate rarely facilitates innovation and the equitable participation of the various segments of civil society. The local public hearings in Brazil, for instance, which are required by law, are mainly informative and do not give an opportunity to substantive debate and to influence decisions (Prux, Balsan and Moura, 2012).

Even though the law guarantees the use of mechanisms of participation, this does not ensure the effective and continued use of this mechanism in democracy. In the

exercise of power, it is the behavior of the actors in concrete situations, their interactions, and dynamics, that define the processes and the effects on reality. The way citizens, political agents, and bureaucrats occupy the existing spaces and create new possibilities can slowly transform the political culture and institutionalize the participation beyond the laws defined as the norm or as an ideal to be reached.

Another characteristic found in several Latin American countries is the state's decentralization, local governments having more responsibility for the implementation of public policies and services (Abrucio, 2007). Although there is more proximity between governments and citizens at the local level, and many sociopolitical innovations emerge within this framework, the resources and mechanisms of regulation are concentrated in central government. This makes local governments more responsive to central government technocrats than to local citizens (Abrucio and Loureiro, 2005).

On the other hand, there are significant degrees of involvement of civil society in local governments. Participatory budgeting experiences in Brazil were initiated in several municipalities, especially in municipal administrations dominated by parties guided by popular ideologies. By directly involving the population in the choice of the main investment projects and the proportion of the budget allocated to each of them, the strategy has become an inspiration for similar practices elsewhere (Pogrebinschi and Tanscheit, 2017). However, due to its dependence on political forces, the strategy of participatory budgeting is considered vulnerable (Cunill Grau, 1996). According to Rennó and Souza (2012), the program is significantly affected by the ideological orientation of the party that implements it, undergoing periodic transformations. This demonstrates the low institutionalization of this public policy in local communities and the political culture of the countries.

Based on this context, it is possible to perceive that although hegemonic participation strategies often present a narrative to strengthen civil society, they still place the state as the central actor of the process, reinforcing the ideology of domination and concentration of power in the public bureaucracy. As noted by Pogrebinschi and Tanscheit (2017, p.1), "where participation depends on governments, civil society can't do much to redeem democracy [...]."

Since participation strategies are based on ideological conceptions which, although placed at opposite poles, represent the old order, they offer little or no answers to the need to re-articulate relations between the state and civil society. As a result, the political landscape of Latin America is a source of concern for different communities, which are not represented in this ideological polarization.

This "troubled" scenario points to the necessity and the possibility of developing a new ideological concept that is outside the continuum formed from the "technocratic" to the "popular" extremes; an ideological concept that works as an emergent paradigm.

## **5. An emergent paradigm?**

The emergent paradigm, which Ramos (2009) calls theory *P*, is based on the notion of possibility. It is an objective possibility, which has empirical support. The idea is that there is no single path when it comes to historical events, but a horizon of multiple possibilities. In this way, at any given time, unexpected events can take place, leading society to a new stage, different from the conventional image of its future by linear logic. In this sense, a third political and ideological strand is presented as a possibility, which can take different paths, including deconcentration of state and bureaucratic power.

A variation of this strand would be influenced by a liberal economic ideology giving the state a minimum regulatory role and entrusting the market with the coordination of interests and resources to fulfill them. The state bureaucracy would be responsible for the conditions that guarantee the functioning of the market, regulate and control at minimum levels, and assist those affected by the asymmetries and inequities of the market system. The political elements of liberalism are not regarded as priority and citizens are called upon to participate as consumers or as volunteers to support the tasks related to assistance. It seeks to deconcentrate the power of the state not in favor of individual liberties or of deep re-articulation between the spheres, but of strengthening the market (Denhardt, 2011).

The second variation of this strand, in its initial stage of construction, would favor the deconcentration of power and the diversity of forms of engagement between the state and civil society. This could happen through various mechanisms of networked democratic governance, giving a prominent role to communities, especially local communities (Schommer, 2013), and recognizing the market and private companies as political actors to be held accountable for public issues (Alves, 2013). In this conception, the public bureaucracy would play a role of articulation, mediation, and negotiation rather than regulation and provision of goods and services (Denhardt, 2011).

There is still resistance, uncertainties and contradictory expectations both from the public bureaucracy, the politicians and citizens. Citizens who want, at the same time, autonomy, protection, regulation, and provision of services by the state.

An example of articulated engagement is the Latin American Network for Fair, Democratic and Sustainable Cities and Territories, formed by initiatives in more than ten countries in Latin America. Using diversified methodologies, it seeks to engage citizens and various segments of civil society in the debate on the challenges of the city or territory, in requesting and producing information, and in building accountability plans and systems related to quality of life and the performance of governments and companies that use resources or provide public services (Cáceres, 2014; Dahmer, 2014; Hernandez Quiñones and Cuadros, 2014).

A source of democratic innovations in the Region is the project *Latinno-Innovations for Democracy in Latin America* (Pogrebinschi, 2017) The platform assembles data of a diverse set of initiatives in 18 countries, from 1990 to 2016. Some are local or national and are now spreading to more countries in Latin America. The data is coded for 43 variables related to the context, institutional design, and impact of each initiative, classified by its means –deliberation, e-participation, direct voting and citizen representation, and by its ends– political inclusion, social equality, accountability, responsiveness and, the rule of law.

LATINNO assumes that citizen participation has become an important means to improve the quality of democracy in Latin America. Thousands of new institutional designs have been created in the previous years that aim not only to include more citizens in the political process, but also –*through* citizen participation– to make governments more responsive and institutions more accountable, in addition to strengthening the rule of law, and promoting social equality (Pogrebinschi, 2017).

To understand their characteristics and effects, some cases among the 2,507 already mapped are currently being deeply investigated by the researchers. There are initiatives led by civil society groups, engaging the public bureaucracy in some degree and phase. Others are led by the national government in partnership with civil society in

the design and implementation of the whole process. Many are led by the local government with a central role for community organizations (Pogrebinschi, 2017).

In any case, the characteristic that differentiates the emerging paradigm of the two dominant ideologies is that public bureaucracy does not occupy a central position in the articulation between state and civil society. It continues to play a fundamental role, indeed it does not exercise power *over* society but *with* society. There are more and diverse types of bridges (Guerzovich and Schommer, 2016) between civil society and government, and public bureaucracy becomes more transparent and accountable to society.

However, these trends face obstacles, such as the market power concentration and consequential losses in democracy; the elitist nature of some of these initiatives; the tendency for fragmentation and discontinuity in the actions of social movements and segments of civil society; and the fact that society calls for more autonomy, decentralization and flexible and dynamic forms of social, political and economic coordination. At the same time, however, society reproduces and legitimizes old social values and political practices, such as authoritarianism, tutelage and a paternalistic state, populism, corporatism, patrimonialism, and clientelism in state-society relations (Campos, 1990; Nunes, 2003; Pinho and Sacramento, 2009).

This paradoxical scenario, however, is characteristic of a period of paradigmatic transition. As observed by Ramos (2009, p.64), “in these moments of transition contradictory paradigms coexist and partially overlap,” since it takes time until an emerging paradigm sets in and consolidates itself.

However, Smith and Ziegler (2009) see little reason to believe in a paradigm shift. For the authors, although liberal democracy has gained ground in recent years, “there is no self-evident reason to believe that it will displace illiberal democracy in the foreseeable future” (Smith and Ziegler, 2009, p. 374). Liberal democracy, which might be impossible in extractive-based contexts, as is the case in most Latin American countries, and, even in other regions, has been emptied in its political component, as capitalism developed (Dryzek, 1996).

Faced with scenarios of uncertainty, the public bureaucracy concentrates on maintaining power. It offers stability and is alert to future trends, to, when necessary, “change so that everything remains as it is.”

In sum, there are thrilling themes and experiences for theoretical and empirical research in the next years.

## 6. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze how great political and ideological changes affect public bureaucracy in its relationship with civil society regarding different strategies of openness to participation. It was based on the understanding that the re-articulation of state-civil society relationship goes through the mediation of public bureaucracy, which is influenced by different ideologies.

Two main ideological bases affect the behavior of the public bureaucracy regarding participation. The first is characterized as a demobilizing regime of actors outside the state, implying a closed bureaucracy, capable of acting in isolation due to its technical condition. In these cases, participation is rare and, when it is observed, it aims to legitimize the state’s action. The second is marked by people mobilization. The bureaucracy is more open to citizen participation, but the state is the actor that proposes and controls the channels for participation.

In Latin America, it was possible to observe the swing between periods of greater and lesser openness to the active involvement of civil society in the public issues. Although it was believed in the 1960s that Latin American countries would evolve from narrow to expanded democracies, the reality is that the countries swung in authoritarian periods characterized by strategies of complete closure of public bureaucracy. Also, initiatives commensurate with both the precepts of direct democracy and those of participatory democracy, which involve greater involvement of civil society, were experienced. However, due to the political and ideological instabilities, these initiatives are often under threat.

Latin American countries swing between different ideological conceptions that represent the old order because they reinforce the centrality of the state and its public bureaucracy, which, by its standard configuration, seeks the maintenance and concentration of power. Thus, dominant ideologies do not offer answers to the need for deeper re-articulation between state and civil society. Therefore, it is possible to observe the restlessness and initiatives of different communities, indicating the possibility of a new ideological conception. Although this is still under construction, depending on the path followed, it might generate new answers.

The possibility of a third political and ideological strand, within the notion of an emerging paradigm, requires, a new position from citizens, especially when seeking the strengthening of the politics and the approximation between state and civil society. As the state ceases to take the role of public service provider and acts as an articulator and mediator of the process, there is no room for the citizen to be limited to the condition of beneficiary. Along with the sharing of power between the spheres that compose the social systems, responsibilities are also shared. In this way, the citizen becomes from a passive representative –who delegates and barely controls the exercise of power– to an active agent, who exercises power participating in decisions and delivering public services. This requires a high degree of dedication to the *res publicae*.

This change is challenging, not only because the consolidation of an emerging paradigm coexists with the previous ones. It is challenging because the role played by the citizen begins to change in contexts marked by power inequalities between the spheres and the citizens themselves. That is, there is a long and arduous path (to be discovered, explored, and researched). This path is not guaranteed since other possibilities may arise from various events and may present themselves as setbacks.

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