

Participation and Brazilian Misery: the participationism on the conditions of possibility in the Brazilian capitalism

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This article develops an approach about participation based on materialism, and establishes its differences — in comparison to the dominant lines of thought — when it comes to explaining the difficulties to obtain effective political participation in Brazil. On one hand, culturalism points to a lack of formal or cultural preparation to participate. On the other hand is the notion that neoliberalism is the limiting factor. The differentiation of the approaches proposes the study of the real conditions of possibility for participation, given by the format of the policies, starting by analyzing the process of objectivation of capitalism in Brazil, considering the particularity of such format discussing the *colonial way*. The basic understanding is that the participation in the atrophic capitalism is a particular form of participationism because of the process of incipient transformations and the excluding modernizations which block the popular participation and secure the interests of dominant classes.

Keywords: participation; participacionism; atrophic capital; particularity; Brazil.

Participação e miséria brasileira: o participacionismo nas condições de possibilidade do capitalismo no Brasil

O presente ensaio propõe um tratamento materialista da participação a partir de sua diferenciação ante as correntes dominantes na explicação das dificuldades de efetivação das formas participativas na esfera política no Brasil. De um lado, coloca-se o culturalismo que acusa a ausência de uma preparação formal ou cultural para a participação. De outro, insurge a corrente que identifica no neoliberalismo o fator impeditivo. A proposta de diferenciação aponta para o estudo das condições reais de possibilidade da forma política a partir da análise do processo de objetivação do capitalismo no Brasil, trazendo à baila a particularidade dessa formação pela chamada *via colonial*. A constatação básica é a de que a participação no capitalismo atrófico é uma forma particular de participacionismo em razão de processos de transformação incipientes e de modernização excludente que bloqueiam a participação popular, garantindo os interesses ligados às conciliações das classes dominantes.

Palavras-chave: participação; participacionismo; capital atrófico; particularidade; Brasil.

La participación y la miseria brasileña: el participacionismo en las condiciones de posibilidad del capitalismo en Brasil

El presente ensayo propone un tratamiento materialista de la participación a partir de su diferenciación delante de las corrientes dominantes en la explicación de las dificultades de materialización de las formas participativas en la esfera política en Brasil. Por un lado, se coloca el culturalismo que acusa la ausencia de una preparación formal o cultural para la participación. Por otro, repunta la corriente que identifica el neoliberalismo como factor que la impide. La propuesta de diferenciación apunta para el estudio de las condiciones reales de la posibilidad de la forma política a partir del análisis del proceso de objetivación del capitalismo en Brasil, trayendo a la discusión la particularidad de la formación por la llamada *vía colonial*. La conclusión básica es la de que la participación en el capitalismo atrófico es una forma particular de participacionismo en razón de procesos de transformaciones insipientes y de la modernización excluyente que bloquea la participación popular garantizando los intereses ligados a las conciliaciones de las clases dominantes.

Palabras clave: participación; participacionismo; capital atrófico; particularidad; Brasil.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The so-called re-democratization process in Brazil, through organized struggle of different social agents, have been materialized positively in the constitutional provisions concerning the direct participation of civil society in the resolutions and decisions about public policies. Therefore, expectations and hopes were deposited in the different mechanisms for popular participation to be implemented and regulated on post-constitutional period.

The 1988 Constitution determines that all power emanates from the people, who exercise it by means of elected representatives or *directly*. Party system has become pluralist, municipalities have gained autonomy in the Federation¹, new mechanisms for exercising political power and expressing popular sovereignty have been provided. The expansion of social rights and control agencies were also elements that stimulated changes in ordinary and complementary laws to accompany the new political phase after military dictatorship. Thus, referendums, plebiscites, public policy conferences, expansion and redefinition of the role of public hearings, expansion of councils and committees, establishment of participative budget experiences and elaboration of municipal master plans² have occurred.

However, nearly after three decades of “new republic”, the participatory democracy did not succeed to become effective as it was expected. Different analysis, from different perspectives and “levels of analysis”, have tried to comprehend which are the reasons and what is the meaning of this participatory democracy non-achievement in Brazil.

Two perspectives stand out attempting to explain these limits. A first one perspective emphasizes the absence of the necessary “political culture” for the agents and political actors responsible for the implementation of the necessary mechanisms for the development of participation in Brazil. The second emphasizes the neoliberal shift of Brazilian politics materialized specially since the triumph of the political project represented by the election of Fernando Collor in 1989 and subsequently under PSDB and PT governments.

Without exhausting the myriad of other currents, our purpose is to point out the basic outlines of these two lines for, then, to suggest a third position of analysis of the Brazilian reality centered on the materialism traced by Marx, Lukács and Chasin. This position suggests that participation in Brazil is a participacionism³ engendered by the real conditions of possibilities due to the trajectory of capitalism objectification through what is called *colonial way*. In this sense, participacionism is not a deviation from the democratic impulse nor a Brazilian cultural trace, but it can be understood by objective conditions of formation of an atrophic capitalism that implies a political form refractory to popular participation in State management.

¹ Barreto (2011:213) determines that “mainly after the 1988 Constitution, municipalities have passed to be a strategic sphere of government in terms of public policies. In addition, due to some responsibilities they have assumed as governmental entities in this new municipality cycle, they have turned caudate of many competences that were detached from federal sphere. That Constitution also allowed a decentralization that made the local power sphere crucial”.

² According to Vaz e Pires (2011:248), “Prompted by its promulgation in 1988, the called IPs — as management councils, participative budget (PB) experiences, conferences etc. — have been disseminated throughout municipalities of the country turning an inevitable reality to managers in conformation and general administration of policies in areas as diverse as health, education, urban infrastructure and environment”.

³ As we will attempt to show, participacionism can be alluded here temporarily as a modality of integration of popular demands for greater influence in public administration, but it is given in unaltered economic conditions and with limited effects. It is a mode of integration of dominated classes, so that the structures of this domination itself are not altered.

Our goal could not be to exhaust discussions, but point out elements for this analysis, seeking to determine nexuses between State management and social contradictions. The popular participation in State management would be a relevant mediation of economic policies conditioning and, thereby, of economic development itself. For this reason, better understanding of the possibilities of participation in Brazilian capitalism possesses an explanatory weight for the economic policies themselves and for the kind of exclusionary development that marks the national history. Besides, the proposition we will make ahead related to the materialism can equally contribute to debates tangent to public administration research, since it retakes the most central elements of Marxian thought, which are frequently ignored in this area.

Thus, we present in the next topic the two main currents. In the forth topic we discuss the materialist foundation in Marx's lineaments. In the penultimate topic, we present the elementary determinations of *colonial way* as a historic unfolding of the discussion retained in materialism. Finally, we present our final considerations.

2. CULTURALISM AND NEOLIBERALISM

The recovery of the many studies carried out in Brazil on the experiences of participation reveals at least two central theses concerning the difficulties of effectuation as already noted in the introduction of the present work.

Actually, they have a similar base: that of jurists and citizens surprised by the non-accomplishment of such an advanced law. The diagnostic is similar, but the pattern is another.

In general, the findings report the insufficient process of realization of achievements attained through 1988 Constitution. The Constitution draft itself, made public in 1986, reveals the height of hopes of part of the society, since the "comprehensive content, of social democratic character", created the "opportunity, propitiated to every Brazilian citizens, of talking and being heard, to participate and feel their participation seriously examined" (Marquesini, 1986:12). *Whether or not there was a straight analysis of the sense of 1988 Constitution is a matter we ought to bear in mind*, considering our present historically privileged *post festum* position. It is correct, nevertheless, that in that period there appeared a participation normalization with great progressive content.

Little time later, researches about effectiveness of mechanisms for participation started. In 1989, could one read that "even when relations between municipal government and population were substantively altered for better [...] there is much to be conquered and consolidated in the enlargement of institutional participation spaces" (Fischer and Teixeira, 1989:46). This diagnostic was common, identifying the progressive character, the steps taken, and those that were yet to be taken in order to advancing.

Very quickly, inquiries about the causes of this infectivity surged. The always renewed argument sustained on volition omnipotence initiated. "It is possible", said Pedro Demo in 1991, "to mount a systematic proposal of social participative planning, [...] impressing in many areas of public actuation, currently disperse and senseless, sense of commitment to the historic process of accomplishment of fundamental rights, and, hence, of important collaboration in the construction of democracy" (Demo, 1991:53). With such progressive legislation, it would suffice to have the politic volition to convert law in application.

Apparently, the volition did not manifest itself, as the emblematic conclusion that “the process of the people participation in the planning of hydric works, is, in Brazil, an incipient process” (Campos, 1995:170), reverberates much of what was divulged in the ensuing periods on other participatory experiences. The tone is that of insufficiency, something falling short of what the constitutional letters expressed.

The question of political volition finds its dwelling-place on the first thesis with explanatory force of this infectivity. The culturalist foundation that tries to situate the limitations imposed by a kind of national political culture is well known. By way of example, a “political culture concept” is adopted, referring to “the generalization of a set of values, orientations and political attitudes amongst the different segments in which the political market [!] is divided and results from both processes of socialization as well as the concrete political experience of members of political community” (Silva and D’arc, 1996:48). The outcome of this process is the apprehension of

unfeasibilities and limits [that] became explicit in governmental attempts to develop participatory experiences, such as the difficulties of identification of popular movement, the existence of a public sector administratively unproductive, bureaucratized and with a strong centralizing and sectorized culture, the lack of citizens access to information and the non-explicitness of channels of participation. [Silva and D’arc, 1996:49]

The culturalist explanation takes a more concrete form, as it follows:

[...] even though there are regulatory variables that oblige the realization of the process of public hearings of budget, the civil society participation faces difficulties to exercise, because it is influenced by normative and cultural-cognitive variables that actuate negatively in the process. The normative and cultural-cognitive variables are based on values, beliefs and cultural variables such as political culture and budgetary clientelism that derives from it. Within the logic of systems, this happens because councilors are part of a subsystem of its own, which is autopoietic, has its own values and rules and makes it difficult the entry of civil society subsystem that pursues to participate in legislative subsystem. Despite being open to participation, the Legislative Power subsystem does it molding participation according to conduct standards that already exists in relationship between parliamentarian and civil society. [Brelàz and Alves, 2013:822]

It is, therefore, a difficulty that could be potentially bypassed on the focus on information and capacitance of counselors and other interested parties (cf. Gohn, 2006). The “citizenship formation” emerges, thus, as a means of confrontation of difficulties imposed by the self-referential national political culture.

In another perspective — and with less difficulty on handling with the economic dimension that involves the problem of participation — the analysis that emphasize the impact of “neoliberalism”⁴

⁴ To increase our warning that it’s not intended to exhaust the subject, it must be said that many pages were accumulated about the meaning of the concept of “neoliberalism”: as an “ideology”, as the financialized phase of capitalism, as a specific management policy of the State, etc. The discussion also produced a theoretical posture aligned with the French intellectual environment, such as Pierre

have the advantage of not succumbing to the supposed “omnipotence of will” and of opening more directly the contradictions of which capitalism lives. The problematic issues are others.

The start point, however, anchors yet on the potentialities that hadn't come to the world by the 1988 Constitution mediation, which was partly obstructed by an ascendant economic-political project during the period of 1980-2000.

Nevertheless, following Dagnino, “the advance of the neoliberal strategy determined a deep inflexion on political culture in Brazil and Latin America” (Dagnino, 2004a:98). The problem is taken as a result of the dispute between different projects, the democratic project and the neoliberal project, because the last one

would operate not only with a minimal State conception, but also with a minimalistic conception about both politics and democracy. Minimalistic because it narrows not only the space, the political arena, but it's participants, it's process, agenda and action field. [Dagnino, 2004a:98]

Even though the authoress puts, in another place, an exceeding weigh on a “discursive crisis”, the tonic of the “perverse confluence” remains strong because

this discursive crisis results from a perverse confluence between, on the one hand, the neoliberal project installed in our countries over the last decades and, on the other hand, a democratizing, participative project that emerges from the authoritarian regimes crises and from different national efforts on democratic deepening. [Dagnino, 2004b:1940]

The dispute between these two distinct projects has shown, according to the authoress self-repetition, that the “advance of the neoliberal strategy determined a deep inflexion on political culture in Brazil and Latin America” (Dagnino, 2004a:146). The centrality of this argument proves itself by its repetition. It's necessary to retain the permanence of a polarization of “political projects” (cf. Dagnino, 2004b:144) in this treatment. It's also necessary to set the explanation considerably distinct from the *culturalist* one, since it determinates the neoliberalism as a restrictive *factor* to the advance of participation in Brazil.

A similar but more realistic analysis can also be contemporarily found in national production. Without appealing to culturalism or to a “discursive crisis”, we apprehend some conflict of eras and of “ideologies” that encapsulates the problem of the insufficiency of participation and of the councils:

Dardot and Christian Laval, following a Foucaultian analysis of a “neoliberal rationality” (Andrade and Ota, 2015). This analytic has also gained ground in Brazil. In any case, there remains the problem of attributing to the “neoliberalism” what is from capitalism. For Dardot and Laval, “neoliberalism is not a way of government that adheres to a doctrine the privileged means of power; it is based, above all, on the coercion it exerts on individuals through the situations of competition that it actively puts into practice” (Andrade and Ota, 2015:284). We remind the reader of the countless indications of Marx to the war of all against all in capitalism. As an illustration, it is said that the “social division of labor confronts autonomous producers of commodities, who recognize no other authority but that of competition, of the coercion exercised over them by the pressure of their reciprocal interests” (Marx, 2013:430). It is an indication that appears in many places of the Marxian reflection because it is an unchanging mark of capitalism until now. Thus, we can see that while classical economists tended to universalize to all eras what was specific characteristic of capitalism, this French line operates differently by particularizing general features of capitalism to one of its very specific periods. In any case, the problem of pointing to neoliberalism as an interfering factor is persistent.

The 1990's years were marked by reforms that promoted deregulation, flexibilization of social security and labor laws, decrease of State's actuation on social areas among other similar actions. The ideological values that followed the social movements until the 1980's, related to universal rights and social transformation, were supplanted with the new order emergence. More than that, the retrieval of typical individualist values seems to have been the most fruitful seed of this context. The experience of the management councils — object of observations and analysis in this paper — cannot escape from these circumstances. Registered in the Constitution and in the contemporaneity of Brazilian society as a response to a period rich of hopes, ethical and social values and intense mobilization, they seem to depend on this environment to fully function, even though they free themselves of what may consider overstatement of political romanticism. [Gurgel and Justen, 2013:374]

Both forms of explanation (the two theses above related to the difficulties on achieving general participation in State's area, including the councils experience) have differences already mentioned. Both thesis find exogenous and interfering explanations. But the mentioned differences reveal the superiority of the second thesis and of its identification of the links between the participation potentialities and a determined stage of capitalism development, without ignoring the "cultural" dimension.

Indeed, the culturalist explanation can't be presented in any other way but the abstract, indefinite and arbitrary one. If the superiority of the second thesis rests on the identification of the relation between the political ground and the economic ground, it is persistent, on the other hand, the difficulty of apprehending the real meaning of the 1988 Constitution it's taken as an episode of a long path of the capitalism objectification in Brazilian particularity. That is why it resorts to the understanding that the "re-democratizing" impulse was obstructed by neoliberalism. It is the difficulty with this issue that condemns the superiority verified to its own immanent limits: the intellectual reproduction of a polarization between political projects that doesn't express properly the particular circumstances of Brazilian capitalism as a condition of possibility for the given form of participation on its insufficiencies.

3. PARTICIPATION AND MATERIALISM

We intended to present a new and distinct analysis searching the explanation in the particular way of capitalism objectification in Brazil and sufficiently evaluating the existing participation not as "insufficient application of the Constitution", not as a departure caused by "neoliberalism", but as a possible form under the conditions of an antagonistic reality that didn't have overcoming social process, which means in other words, marked by insipient social revolutions from what the "re-democratization" during the 1980's is only an example. Well seen, the endogenous here is the reference to correspondences between the actual participation form and the characteristics of capitalism that were wrought in Brazil.

The right understanding of this problem requires the explanation of two fundamental and interrelated aspects.

The first one refers to an accurate comprehension of materialism as an effort to a more adjusted

explanation of reality itself.

It's more than usual from many sides to accuse of having a certain economicism the explanations that, like the second thesis above, do not avoid the concrete relation between capitalism and participation. Although, as seen, the second explanation have accepted too soon a supposed "neoliberal distortion", the accuracy stands in not analyzing the dimension of participation in governmental instances in a tight and autonomous way. But even this thesis misses the essential: apprehending participation as a political form of a content that is on its outside. It's in this sense that they refer to neoliberalism as an interfering distortion that, if absent, would allow the accomplishment of the "democratizing" tendency.

Besides economicism, it's very usual the accusation of determinism. Materialism would be just another special approach, like a collection of epiphenomenal facts, all of them reducible by mechanicism to the economic sphere. Even currently the vulgarization produces its effects. Thus, both the "ideological superstructure" and the "conscience forms" would be no more than lineal, pure reflexes of what happens in the economy.⁵

The apprehension of the problem in its factual basis is totally different. The fundamental determination is that material relations are objective conditions to these derivative forms — which doesn't mean that they're insignificant or less important — without which wouldn't be possible the existence of State, of philosophy, of arts, etc. The determination, then, it's not in a mechanical causation in a "Durkheim style", but in the possibilities created by the concrete relations among human beings. Derivative forms non-corresponding to the material relations, to they're basis, are not possible, unless in a secondary way or with secondary effects (cf. Marx, 2011a:62).

In the spite of the possible variations of the derived forms, their persistence or perishing are located in the connections more or less strong and more or less weak with the concrete relations. In this sense, it is possible that the political form may be considerably altered, varying between more vile forms, like the bonapartism, and forms friendlier geared towards the struggles of the working class and the popular sectors, like the representative democracies found within the limits of a same general order of production and reproduction of life, like the sociability of the capital. In the reciprocity between the historical continuity and discontinuity, and considering the importance of the first, the variation of countless aspects articulates itself with the preservation of more fundamental aspects. Insofar the State, considered as political form, can modify itself because of its considerable heterogeneity compared to the material relations, uncountable fundamental elements of the sociability are preserved, like the value logic, until a more profound transformation can really alter the production of social relations, modifying the articulate group of determinations of a particular sociability. That can be understood in terms of a "real movement of the political form", movement, whoever, of a non-self-logic because of the "nexuses with the driving forces of primary order on which also act reciprocally the concrete

⁵ A reader non-familiarized with these categories can find support on the classical Preface of 1859 (Marx, 1974). There can be found a differentiation between the material relations, on the one hand, and the ideological superstructure with the associated "forms of social conscience" on the other — or "ideological forms" resuming both ideological superstructure and forms of social conscience (Marx, 1974:136). It is a very synthetic way to express the objective links between complexes that constitute society. There is the economic complex, in other terms, the social relations inside "civil society" (relations immediately economical, familiar, affective, etc.) and the "ideological forms" (State, law, politics, theology, theories, philosophy, arts, etc.). We'll show ahead that the relation between these great complexes is the reciprocity, being the economic complex a tonic bond of the articulated totality.

forms of the States” (Paço Cunha, 2017:227).

What should be kept in mind in this moment is that these relations create the conditions of possibility of the political form, they are presumptions that simultaneously allow and limit the political form, of which variation occurs by not a proper logic. Equally important is the determination that the political form, therefore, oscillates between modes of domination because of the antagonism that forms its base. Even the democratic moment of the real movement of the political form is just a mode of domination, a form of economic domination in the present days (Chasin, 2000a). It is here that reciprocity is brought to light, the reflex determination between economy and politics, that is, as a mode of domination, where politics also conditions the economy in very complex ways. One is interpenetrated in the other; they are different, but they form a historical *contingent unity*, not an inescapable destiny.

It is in this sense that the participation, situated in the state sphere, must be placed in relation with the conditioning material factors, namely, with its *conditions of possibility* in the manner showed. And is not enough to point out neoliberalism as a deviation element insofar as the authentic particularity is lost in this explanation. In other words, “the movement of reciprocal conditioning is historical and respects the national circumstances” (Paço Cunha, 2017:230). The analysis of the particularity, however, does not mean a disregard for the more universal conditioning elements that act on the complex analyzed and thus Lukács argues that:

If Marx, as we saw, considers indispensable for the cognitive process the abstractions and the generalizations, equally indispensable appears to him the specification of the complexes and concrete connections. In ontological terms, specification means the following: to exam the incidence of certain laws, of their concretization, modification, tendencies, of their concrete interaction in determined concrete situations, in determined concrete complexes. The knowledge only can open the way to those objects when it investigates the particular traces of every objective complex. [Lukács, 2012:258]

Thus, it is the analysis of the particular traces that can clarify in which way the incidence of universal determinations becomes concrete in every objective complex and, therefore, “[...] it’s a matter of understanding the ontological facticity [*Geradesosein*] of a phenomenal complex connected with the general legalities that conditions it and which, at the same time, it seems to deviate” (Lukács, 2012:258). By the specification of the real movement of the historically determined reciprocal conditioning factors of different ontological levels is that it is possible to apprehend the concreteness of the legalities and the more general tendencies.

The participation is itself included in this movement and its correct apprehension depends on the capture of the fundamental determinations of the particular way of capitalist objectification in Brazil, as we will develop in the following terms as colonial way, and it is not enough to adopt the constitution of 1988, vestige of a political expression, as a mark of this particularization, leaving behind all the previous principal processes which helped give the real sense of the so-called “redemocratization”.

The other aspect already indirect referred as an ontological priority makes explicit that dialectics isn’t a projection of the thought on the reality, a very common epistemological approach in these days. Knowing that “dialectics is only susceptible of discovery, never of application” (Chasin, 2009:236), it

becomes a matter of apprehending dialectics as a “logic of the real” (Chasin, 2009:236) reproduced by the thought. In the articulate group of the diverse reciprocal determinations exists a movement in itself capable of be apprehended by the thought in the limits of the possibilities given by the social conditions that transcend the individual researcher. That means that specific social conditions can be more or less permissible or deterrent to the apprehension of the real determinations, the fundamental nexuses. This reciprocal articulation, therefore, isn’t without direction. And what really gives this direction if it isn’t, already, the result of human planning, of the coronation of humanity as a demiurge of itself?

The misunderstanding about the “last instance” of the economic created every type of difficult and the already alluded mentions of economic mechanicism. Marx, although, put the things in terms of a preponderant moment or factor [*übergreifende Moment*] in the articulate group of the multiple determinations (cf. Marx, 2011a:49). The discussion, for example, about production and distribution, lets clear not only the anteriority of the production but also that in the reciprocal relation, in the conditioning attributes that distribution in itself exerts over production, the last is the preponderant moment or factor of the relation, the factor that gives weight to the articulation and, therefore, initiate certain tendencies that only are confirmed by the mediation of the other conditioning determinations. In the proper way apprehended as the “tonic link of the articulated complex” (Chasin, 2009:133) that never means the “homogenization of the determinations” (Chasin, 2009:133) in reciprocity, the preponderant moment or factor has the function of demonstrating that in the real interaction between factors one of them plays the preponderant role and “when this fundamental relation isn’t considered in the proper way, either arises or an unilateral causal series and, hence, mechanicist, simplifier and deformer of the phenomena, or that relation in need of a direction” (Lukács, 2012:334).

This account demonstrates that, on the contrary direction of the mechanical causation and the interaction without direction, reality itself shows that there is a preponderant moment or factor in an articulation. The relation alluded elsewhere between continuity and discontinuity is a reasonable example of this situation, because it shows that the variation of elements lives together with the persistence of others, in a way that, until now, hasn’t resulted in a change in the fundamental characteristics of the human mode of production and reproduction under the domination of the logic of valor. This also shows that the movement of the political form, exposed in the earlier paragraphs, has in the material relations its preponderant moment or factor and upon which it also acts by the own reciprocal nature of the relations of the articulate unity of the concrete determinations.

For this reason, is possible the occurrence of an episode like the Constitution of 1988 that leaves considerable intact the “tonic link of the articulated complex”. By the way, we need to say, it is the tonic link that gives the conditions of functionality of that episode. And that apprehension of the real problem already shows the difficulty of being stranded in the apparent polarization between the political projects in Brazil, one “democratizing” and the other, neoliberal - by the way, as it is quite common with this kind of duality in the “field of public policy” like, for example, the duality between the “managerial model” (neoliberal) *versus* the “societal model” (democratic) (cf. Paes de Paula, 2005; Souza Filho, 2011). They represent only a way of preservation of the material conditions already existing in society through political change and, for that, the process of “redemocratization” is a component part of the same agenda: the agenda of the owners and of the alliances that they mobilize, including the ones with popular support. This process wasn’t anything more than the transition inside

the capitalist mode of domination, a transition from the bonapartism with broad acceptance of the private capital to the institutionalization of the bourgeoisie autocracy (Chasin, 2000b), as we shall see. In short, a conservative progressivism after the “excluding modernization” (Rago, 1998) of the military bonapartism era.

It is not reasonable, whoever, not to identify in the political transition important effects on the material dimension. Some conquests gained in the alliance that propelled the Constitution of 1988 helped the undoing of some nodes that led to a greater integration of Brazil in the international dynamics, developing ways of responding - although in a limited manner - to certain popular demands, especially through the mediation of the consumer market and the increment of the household debt. There’s no need to say that social struggle finds better conditions of development in the “democracy of owners” than under the guise of bonapartism.

But these elements only become evident through the analysis of the colonial way of objectification of capitalism in the Brazilian particularity, since it helps to reveal that the “insufficiencies” of the political form often found by the research done in the field are, actually, expressions of more deep conditioning factors. Only in this way the redemocratization can be apprehended as a new conciliation, as a continuity, therefore, of the historical relations of dominance under the appearance of a political transition.

With these aspects brought to the forefront, however, it is possible to determine that participation in the political sphere is given under the conditions of possibility created by a historically determined sociability in which the preponderant moment or factor, as a tonic link of the articulated totality, is in a reciprocal relation with the results that operate from that possibilities. And this articulation is never fully understood without the historical particularization, attaching itself on the general characteristics of capitalism. It is in this sense that we need to apprehend the formation of capitalism in Brazil and the effects of this particular way, especially concerning the political life in which the “problematized” participation takes place.

4. COLONIAL WAY OF CONSTITUTION OF CAPITALISM AND POLITICAL FORM

It is here that the category of particularity finds decisive weight, which allows us to elucidate the character of reality as a complex of complexes (Lukacs, 2012). The formation of Brazilian capitalism had as its particular characteristic its subordination to the interests of foreign capital originating in the central capitalist countries, within a framework of conciliation between the old and the new, where the landed heirs of the colonial extraction economy and the local industrialists are linked to imperialist international capital in the transition from slave production to the capitalist mode of production in Brazil. According to Caio Prado Júnior (2008:270):

The situation of dependence and organic and functional subordination of the Brazilian economy in relation to the international group of which it participates, is a fact that is attached to the roots of the formation of the country [...]. Export economy, which is set up to supply food and tropical raw materials to the countries and populations of the temperate regions of Europe and later America, it will organize and function in close dependence on overseas trade in accordance with the way it was formed and developed.

Thus, the former colony does not break with its external dependence and subordination. Industrialization in Brazil takes place within the framework of imperialism, when international capital, already at the forefront of the political dominance in the central capitalist countries, seeks new spaces for its expansion, and “it is its goal to take advantage of the surplus-value of Brazilian work within reach” (Prado Jr., 2008:280). This means that genetically tied to the building of capitalism in Brazil is the dual appropriation of value, that is, the economic surplus generated must be sufficient to meet the interests of foreign capital and local capital, and this circumstance — of a capital hierarchical and international domination — is solved through another determinant element of Brazilian particularity, the overexploitation⁶ of the labor force. Besides that,

[...] it is not only the working class that is stolen but the country as a whole that sees the best part of its riches and resources flow out of its borders. The contradictions of capitalist exploitation thus take on a much sharper and more extreme character. Among other well-known effects are the deficiency and slowness of the essentially weak Brazilian capitalist accumulation. [Prado Jr., 2008:280, emphasis added]

Brazilian capitalism is born, then, with a congenital weakness, which is expressed in the atrophic character of the capital here constituted. Atrophied and weak in its essence, given the lack of possibility of economic progress and its structural subordination to imperialist interests, the Brazilian bourgeoisie tends to exercise its dominance in an autocratic way, according to Chasin (2000b:221):

Because it is devoid of economic power and therefore incapable of promoting the societal network that agglutinates its inhabitants organically through the articulated mediation of classes and segments, the Brazilian framework of proprietary domination is cruelly and consistently completed by the autocratic exercise of political power.

Chasin’s reality analysis is supported by the identification of the “fundamental traits of the way of being and the way of moving of the national formation” (Chasin, 2000b:220), which makes it possible

⁶ According to Marx (2013), the exploitation of the labor force occurs by the extraction of the surplus-value, which is generated when the worker produces beyond the necessary value to pay his salary, whose value is that of the means necessary for his subsistence. The higher surplus-value rate is greater as the excess labor time increases relative to the labor time required to pay the labor force. This increase can occur either by reducing the value of livelihoods or by increasing the relative degree of exploitation, increasing worker productivity in the same working time. In weak economic conditions such as those characterized by colonial capitalism, combined with the relations determined by the slavery and the subalternity with the imperialist poles, the increase in the surplus-value rate has an emphasis on the greater exploitation of the worker by prolonging the working day, by the intensification of the labor process and the expropriation of part of the value needed to reproduce the workforce. Thus, the worker is denied the necessary conditions to restore the wear and tear of his work force. “In capitalist terms, these mechanisms mean that labor is paid below its value and therefore correspond to an overexploitation of the labor force” (Marini, 2011:150). This is a controversial category, for it is taken by most of the intellectual elaboration as a continuous mode of value extraction. However, it expresses from reality a tendency that is effective or not according to counter-tendential forces (like periods of prosperity of the industrial cycle). As Marx wrote, it is “a constant tendency for capital to reduce workers to this nihilistic level” (Marx, 2013:675) with the lowering of wages. This tendency is potentialized in the economically subordinated countries given the dual character of the appropriation of value, that is, simultaneous appropriation by foreign and local capital. It should be clear that this tendency is not the fundamental point of the processes we seek to make explicit, but it is certainly part of a complex of elements and tendencies that demarcate the colonial path of objectification of capitalism in Brazil.

to extract its political and social consequences, identifying the limits and possibilities of the institution of progressive elements constituted in the central bourgeois democracies.

This exclusion of popular participation in the Brazilian political movement is reasonably clear by the fact that the advent of the Republic ‘did not actually pass from a military coup, with the participation of only small civil groups and without any popular participation’ (Prado Jr., 2008:208). Thus, it is a political metamorphosis that promotes the maintenance of the economic power of the proprietary class, while adapting the political and juridical institutions to the demands given by the insertion of Brazil in the global stage of capitalist development of that time, maintaining the subordinate character of the economy.

Coutinho (1974) highlighted the similarity between the Brazilian capitalist formation and the Prussian way, characterized by a conciliation with the backwardness in a framework of a late development of capitalism. J. Chasin (1978) limited the usefulness of this comparison only as an ‘exemplary reference’, not to be taken as a model, but as a peculiar contrast to the ‘classics’ in which the building of industrial capitalism was accompanied by revolutionary processes and fundamental political transformations. In spite of the common traits between Brazil and the Prussian way, in the German case the great rural property has origin in the feudal property, but the Brazilian concentration of lands derives from the mercantile economy of colonial extraction, and whereas the German industrialization occurs in the last decades of the century XIX, developing to the point where Germany becomes an imperialist nation, it occurs in Brazil at the time of imperialist wars, when the country does not break its subordinate condition to the hegemonic poles of international capitalism, “so that German ‘true capitalism’ is late, while the Brazilian is very late” (Chasin 1978:628). In this way, Chasin designates this particularity to which Brazil belongs *colonial way*, since this particularity has its roots in the articulation of the country with the primitive accumulation of the metropolis and in the fact that the industrialization occurs much later than the German process, without ever “breaking with its condition of a country subordinated to the hegemonic poles of the international economy” (Chasin, 1978:628).

The colonial route then occurs within the framework of a formation conditioned by its subordinated integration to imperialism, where the national economy is subsumed to the interests of the hegemonic poles of international capital, beginning the process of industrialization very late, characterized by the interdiction of progressive political flags and struggles. The colonial way means the establishment “of the societal existence of capital without intervention of constituent revolutionary process” (Chasin, 2000b:220). Thus, the capacity for organization of bourgeois sociability on progressive ideals and civilizational injunctions is vetoed at the outset of the consubstantiation of atrophic capital, which, subordinated to imperialism and undergoing impulses according to the demands of external hegemonic poles, imposes itself in an autocratic way, with the democratization of decision-making power and popular participation being challenged, resulting in closed political arrangements and the institutionalization of violence as a solution to popular demands, with the space for social demands limited by the economic need for wage tightening, since overexploitation of force of work is imperative in the dual appropriation of surplus-value.

This particularity is evident in Chasin’s design of the transition from the last military dictatorship to civilian government, namely “the transition from Bonapartism to institutionalized bourgeois autocracy” (Chasin, 2000c:127). In this process, the proprietary class transacted in the old conciliatory way the change of the political system without jeopardizing its economic power, in fact, in Brazil “bourgeois forms of political domination oscillate and alternate in different degrees of Bonapartism

and institutionalized bourgeois autocracy, as our entire republican history demonstrates” (Chasin, 2000c:128).

Thus, criticizing the politician⁷ analysis, in a 1982 article, Chasin warned that:

Ventilate the institutional issues for eventual ‘refinement’, to be decided at indeterminate times by the arch-mighty masters, while economic issues are kept out of discussion, - as a taboo, it was a tactic that dictatorial governments have always used, and government Geisel brought it to perfection. [Chasin, 2000d:73]

The philosopher drew attention to the fact that “given the evident universality of certain formal values of democracy, the question that really matters is not its validity, but that of its possible genesis in each concrete case” (Chasin, 2000a:104). It is necessary to identify the conditions of possibility for the realization of democratic values and effective instruments of transformation that tend to be mystified by formal similarity with institutions of central countries that have undergone specific societal transformation processes. Before signifying immobility or a denial of the need for political transformation, Chasin drew attention to the fact that “among us, democratic construction is a concrete possibility only as a result of social struggles united by the point of view of work” (Chasin, 2000e:145). Therefore, a concrete democracy should be the real objective, which is only possible when viewed from the perspective of work (logic of the transformation of the reality), since in the capitalism embodied by the colonial way it is structurally impossible to enlist the political and institutional forms proper of the liberal/democratic central countries, abstracted from their concrete conditions into abstract universals, given the class incompleteness of the Brazilian bourgeoisie and the atrophy of Brazilian capitalism. The struggle for democracy in Brazil should necessarily include the “struggle for an alternative economic program, which has as its principle the liquidation of the overexploitation of labor” (Chasin, 2000a:105).

However, in the way that the facts happened with the subsumption of the left to the politicism understanding, the *transacted succession*

[...] was the movement by which, given the current economic structure, the political domination of atrophic capital shifted from its Bonapartist profile to its form of institutionalized bourgeois autocracy, both figures of the same antidemocratic domain that typifies it. In other words, the transition consisted in the self-reform of discretionary political domination, in reason and benefit of its foundation. [Chasin, 2000b:223]

In this way, “not only the economic-societal structure was preserved, but also the essence of its correlative political domination that characterizes the country: bourgeois autocratism” (Chasin, 2000b: 222), hence already in 1989, the date of the text in question, it was possible to observe the dismantling

⁷ According to Chasin (2000d:124), “politicism arms a policy that is averse, or incapable of taking into account social imperatives and economic determinants. It expels the economy of politics or, at least, makes the economic process merely parallel or derived from political progress, without ever considering them in its continuous and indissoluble real intertwining, and never admitting the ontologically foundational and matrix of the economic to the political. It is, of course, an ideological step of a liberal root”.

of progressive advances in the new Federal Constitution of 1988 in the “active form of provisional measures, informally reinstating the decree-law” or in the non-regulation of fundamental provisions by the Congress, so that they could be effective. The question that also needs to be judged in the same sense is the character of the popular participation most recently endorsed by the letter of the constitutional norm taken into account the particular course of the Brazilian concrete case. Completed thirty years after the end of the last Bonapartist dictatorship, several elements supposedly exclusive to it follow as constituents of everyday Brazilian reality, even its most violent face, manifested in the conjunction of torture promoted by state agents and impunity (Magane, 2014). What differentiates it is the more specific character of the use of repressive apparatuses, expressed both in the occupations of hills and favelas by the different police, as well as in physical violence, police-military or judicial criminalization against social movements (Deo, 2014). The transition made possible the institutionalization of the legal-institutionalized variant of bourgeois autocracy, where it is possible to guarantee the stability of social relations through the two channels: administrative and repressive measures. Then we have an economy integrated and automated by the logic of value, by the empire of the need for capitalist accumulation determined by a historical formation that restricted the development of democratic-humanist elements and values.

The weakness of the workers’ organization, largely provoked by the strong repression still present, culminated in the development of fragile democratic institutions and in the double determination of contemporary Brazilian misery, features determined by the colonial route and by the logic of value itself condition the forms of political participation in Brazil. It is in this sense that participation develops as participationism, as we will develop later.

Thus, unlike the culturalist thesis or the one that blames neoliberalism as the problem for the achievement of the formal conquests of the 1988 Constitution, the colonial way thesis explicitly explains the concrete limits to the political forms, historically constituted throughout the Brazilian formation, by taking materialism as a way to reveal the objective links between the economic and political terrain. This is possible because it seeks the real nexus between participation and its conditions of possibility amid the primary driving forces. It is not just a matter of culture to be changed by a more citizen-drive political education, in fact, the banner of citizenship is raised by the same media monopolies that have benefited from the last Bonapartist period. The conditions for the development of a new culture are linked to the need to break with the conditions that promote the limits of the so-called non-participatory “political culture”. It is also an insufficient argument to attribute the non-development of participation to a deviation. Far from being a mechanistic analysis linked to the economic, what the colonial way allows to glimpse - in the best expression of the materialism developed here - are the limits immanent to the Brazilian reality, that based on the necessity of the overexploration of the work and on the subordinate character of the interests of the Brazilian bourgeoisie, does not open a placid horizon to the realization of the “achievements” of the last Federal Constitution. The limits of participation germinate in the soil of Brazilian misery.

5. PARTICIPATIONISM VERSUS PARTICIPATION

The set of constituent determinations of the colonial path configures what Chasin (2000) called “Brazilian Misery”. It alludes “[...] synthetically to the set of typical problems of a capitalist social formation, of colonial extraction, which is not contemporary with its time” (Chasin, 2000g:160).

It is from the understanding of these historical determinations that it is possible to elucidate the political forms and the character of social relations in Brazilian particularity. It is only in this way that one can understand the real content of the transformations that have taken place in the so-called re-democratization process. Thus, frustrated expectations can be understood beyond the mere absence of a political culture or a bump given by an intrusive neoliberal political project. The colonial way and the Brazilian Misery allow us to understand “the possible body and soul of its capitalist practice,” and it is clarified that “the transition from Bonapartism to institutionalized bourgeois autocracy, Figueiredo’s not inconsiderable passage to Sarney, is a movement in the interior of Brazilian Misery and its repetition” (Chasin, 2000g:160).

The reiteration of Brazilian misery has one of its expressions in participationism, the “possible participation”, as a problem that transcends the Brazilian particularity itself. Participationism, especially in the social conditions we analyze, is “participation without participant consciousness or participant presence without conscience”, characterized by “serving as a number to political manipulation, devoid of class, consciousness and individuation, without concrete bond of the human and its freedom” (Chasin, 2000g:162). In these terms, participationism is a particular type of “public co-management in the owners’ democracy” (Paço Cunha and Rezende, 2015). It is participation that does not decide, but legitimizes, does not represent a choice, but validates the “possible choice”. However, far from being a theoretical-political limitation of the agents and individuals that participate in deliberative instances, participationism stems from the maintenance of the material conditions that have always concentrated economic and political power within the framework of Brazilian Misery.

By not questioning the status of private property that led to the dictatorship, in the form of the non-ascertainment and non-accountability of companies and their decision-makers that collaborated with the regime of exception, the ground on which Bonapartism was established and walked for twenty years remains intact. This brings us back to the level of production, of the social relations that constitute the nucleus of the production of social wealth in Brazil. Participation, as opposed to participationism, “is to be bound consciously to concrete politics by the finite demands of a given historical moment” (Chasin, 2000:162).

As mentioned before, reality analysis must go beyond the more general features of capitalism if you want to know the particularities in which those traits materialize. Thus, with the elements given, it is possible to evaluate, in an effort of synthesis, that the participation in the Brazilian Misery is ultra-late compared to other ways of objectifying capitalism, but not only. It had a specific function in serving the accommodation of contradictions in the transition between Bonapartism and the institutionalization of bourgeois autocracy with the so-called “re-democratization” process. And if it is touted as a great achievement and advance of “Brazilian democracy,” one must consider not only the “historical moment of advantage” — precisely because it is ultra-late — in relation to other participatory processes already tried worldwide, but also to reflect a certain celebration of the victorious classes in the exchange of military uniforms for suits. Not that the accommodation has no considerable popular interest since social claims find fertile ground outside Bonapartism; does not imply, therefore, something minor or unimportant. It is a question of recognizing that in its own magnitude is included the contradiction of being a movement of discontinuity within a continuity, a relative alteration of form ensuring the preservation of its content. Participationism is in the framework of a new agreement to preserve, not to overcome, Brazilian misery.

We sought, based on the explanation of the fundamental characteristics of the Brazilian particularity, to demonstrate how the conditions of possibility for the development of political forms impacted and impact the attempts to develop mechanisms of participation in Brazil. The tendency of Brazilian historical development is to challenge participation through its confinement to the limits of participationism. Thus, it is reality itself that can shed light on future analyzes, revealing the possibilities of popular-democratic expansion from the concrete soil of Brazilian misery.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this article was to explore some implications of the material determination of participation in the sphere of State management. The central concern was to indicate the development of participation in the conditions of possibility forged by the process of objectification of capitalism in Brazil as a more decisive aspect than the effects of neoliberalism from the 1990s.

Considering the issues, we argue that participation in the conditions of atrophic capital is participationism with specific characteristics. This limited character of the political expression in the Brazilian particularity is not, however, a singular phenomenon, sharing the weaknesses with other processes of capitalist formation that include the central countries that underwent serious processes of social revolution. But the limits of participation are explained in Brazil *not only by the general features of capitalism*, but also because of the particular elements that consecrate the *colonial way*.

It is necessary to make explicit the analytical deficiency of numerous analysis about the participation that ignore the economic-historical aspects of the Brazilian formation in the name of cultural hypostasis that ends up delimiting the participation as a problem of purely political order. Succumbing to the “ruse of politicism,” reality is shattered by the process of apprehending an unreal substance that would occupy, only in this movement of the intellect, the place of material determinations effectively operative in the sense of creating the concrete and conditioning bases of the political aspects (which, of course, influence those).

In this sense, the main contribution of the present work was to recover materialistic determinations for the study of participation. Such determinations point to the intrinsic limits when one parks in the political terrain and ignore the ties with economic issues. Thus, the work had to re-enlight the historical processes of Brazilian particularity, including the so-called redemocratization process in its real bases, and which clearly reflect the processes of social change in Brazil: accommodation between classes and fractions of classes, guaranteeing that the changes remain (impotent) exclusively in the political territory.

Thus, participationism is a concession given by class accommodation, a kind of public co-management in a democracy ruled by the economic interests of the ruling classes. It is not, however, mediation to be dismissed as unimportant, even less for the cultivation of illusions that hypostatize it as the only and effective form of concrete action to the interest of social transformation. Real participation can only arise from modified material conditions in a reality imbued with the necessity of social transformation and only then can their effects be evaluated beyond the mere accommodation of contradictions. And this change cannot be born from the absence of a fusion between the political struggle and the economic struggle since it is a question of changing one’s own material conditions. The question of whether co-management, in the terms given by a participationism, can be mediation for acting in the direction of real changes has already been answered by recent history in Brazil.

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