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Social Movements and Institutions *

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Abstract

This study approaches the relationship between social movements and institutions in Brazil concerning three different stages of the process of re-democratization: the political transition; the National Constituent Assembly; and the new Constitutional Order. The general question is: what is the interface, reciprocity or conflict, between social movements and institutions in this context of social change? The paper examines the different roles of social movements and institutions in each specific period: in the pre-democratization moment, the movement for direct elections for president, *Diretas-Já*, is analyzed; in the National Constituent Assembly, the movement in defense for free public education is examined; in the new constitutional order, the pro-reform political movement is studied. The work focuses on the scope of the studies on social movements and democracy. It belongs to the field of the studies about the representativeness and legitimacy of the demands of social movements in the context of democracy and its challenges.

Key words: social movement, institution, reciprocity, conflict, democracy.

Social Movements and Institutions

Resumen

El estudio aborda la relación entre los movimientos sociales e instituciones en Brasil en tres etapas diferentes del proceso de redemocratización en las últimas décadas: la transición política; la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente; y el nuevo orden constitucional. La pregunta general es: ¿cuál es la relación, la reciprocidad o el conflicto, entre los movimientos sociales y las instituciones en este contexto de cambio social? El artículo examina los diferentes roles de los movimientos sociales e instituciones en cada período específico: en el momento de la transición política analiza el movimiento de las elecciones directas para presidente, las *Diretas-Já*; en la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente aborda el movimiento en defensa de la educación pública y gratuita; en el nuevo orden constitucional se estudia el movimiento pro-reforma política. El trabajo se centra en el ámbito de los estudios sobre los movimientos sociales y la democracia. Pertenece al campo de la investigación sobre la representatividad y la legitimidad de las demandas de los movimientos sociales en el contexto de la democracia y sus desafíos.

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Palabras clave: movimientos sociales, instituciones, reciprocidad, conflicto, democracia.

Social Movements and Institutions

Resumo

O estudo aborda a relação entre movimentos sociais e instituições no Brasil em três diferentes fases do processo de democratização nas últimas décadas: a transição política; a Assembleia Nacional Constituinte; e a nova ordem Constitucional. A questão geral é a seguinte: qual a interface, reciprocidade ou conflito entre os movimentos sociais e instituições neste contexto de mudança social? O artigo examina os diferentes papéis dos movimentos sociais e instituições em cada período específico: no momento da transição política analisa o movimento de eleições diretas para presidente, o *Diretas-Já*; na Assembleia Nacional Constituinte aborda o movimento em defesa da educação pública e gratuita; na nova ordem constitucional focaliza o movimento pela reforma política. O trabalho centra-se no campo dos estudos sobre movimentos sociais e democracia. Pertence ao campo de pesquisa sobre a representatividade e legitimidade das demandas dos movimentos sociais no contexto da democracia e seus desafios.

Palavras-chave: movimentos sociais, instituições, reciprocidade, conflito, democracia.

Introduction

This paper seeks to develop a reflection on the relationship between social movements and institutions, considering three distinct stages of the democratization process in Brazil: the transition from military rule to democracy; the National Constituent Assembly; and the new Constitutional Order. The general question is: what is the interface, reciprocity, or conflict between social movements and institutions in this context of social change?

The study aims at examining the role of social movements and institutions in these three stages, focusing on the analysis of a specific social movement in each period. In the pre-democratization moment, the movement for direct elections for president, *Diretas-Já*, is analyzed. In the National Constituent Assembly, the movement in defense of free public education is examined. In

the new Constitutional Order, the pro-reform political movement is studied. The choice of these three movements resulting from its representativity in Brazilian society in these three times.

This article seeks to identify the agents, individuals or groups, engaged in leadership, programs and platforms. The reflection belongs to the problem of representativeness and legitimacy of the social movements demands in the context of democracy and its challenges.

The proposed reflection focuses on the problematic of relationship between social movements and institutions in a democratic context. However, before examining the relationship between social movements and institutions in this period in Brazil, we approach some conceptual distinctions between social movement and institution in order to understand the dynamics of relationships and social interaction in the given reality.

Social Movements and Institutions

The phenomenon of collective action as inherent part of social life has always occupied an important place in sociological production. Recently, due to a variety of social manifestations, the concept of social movements changed for "new social movements". However, the object of study indicates their specificities and new forms of organization.

In Sociology the collective manifestations were treated with different definitions, such as labor class movements, revolutionary movements, and social struggles (DAHRENDORF, 1982).

Although the social phenomenon of collective action has always been present in sociological reflection, this subject with its different manifestations has arisen much interest in contemporary sociological studies.

In a broad approach, one can say that the social movement itself can be defined as one of the modes of collective action, a social behavior motivated by common goals concerning a group. Social movements, regardless of their shape and context, are an inherent part of social life, of the dynamics of their social relations, tensions and conflicts.

Also in a broad sense, as its name suggests, the social movement is distinguished from social institution, which is a social organization that sets more stable standards of conduct. The social movement is thus defined as a form of social organization more flexible and less durable than a social institution.

The social movement also differs from social mobilization, which is a more flexible and fortuitous form of social organization. Thus, at least for conceptual purposes, manifestations, social movements and institutions are different ways of constituting the social system as they belong to the universe of collective behavior, as opposed to social action motivated by individual orientations. However, in practice, with regard to analysis of specific problems of collective action such distinctions are not always easy to understand (GIDDENS, 2003; TOURAINE, TOURAINE, 2006; SCHERER-WARREN, 2006; COHN, 2008).

The concept of a social movement as it is currently assigned has a recent reconstruction. It seeks to specify movements, in the context of the collective actions, which were created and developed from civil society groups that have in the sphere of *citizenship* the source of inspiration for obtaining rights. These rights, including the recognition of identities, and thus of ethnic and cultural differences, are seen in their multiple dimensions: social, economic, civil, political and cultural. The diversity of the identity of the subjects and the transversality in demands for rights are characteristic of contemporary social movements.

As one of the main theoretical references in the area of collective actions, Alain Touraine (1996) analyzes the importance of the concept of *collective subject* for the examination of social movements. He shows how the notion of collective subject is related to the social movement and how it is in the construction of collective identity. For Touraine, the main goal of social movement is the realization of oneself as an autonomous actor, capable of transforming their situation and their environment, i.e., to recognize themselves as subjects.

According to the author, the social movement is a very particular category within a wide range of actions of claims. It is defined by the desire to obtain new rights. And the new social movements are those that require the recognition of a new type of rights: *cultural rights*. Women, immigrants, and environmentalists are categories and problems of a new paradigm in formation, the cultural one. In a broad way, cultural rights have

been taking over the economic, social and political rights, without eliminating them.

Touraine criticizes still the social movement when it closes by itself and takes on corporate aspects. According to him, when the national liberation movement turns into nationalism, when the class struggle is reduced to corporatism, when feminism is limited to the removal of inequalities between men and women, they cease to be social movements and give way to identity obsession.

Maria da Glória Gohn (2008) analyzes the different understandings of the concept of social movement and debate the current problems of these movements. She builds a repertoire of theories and contributions about the theme, examines the transformations of social movements in recent decades and identifies the multiplicity of forms of social movements today, such as the environmental, feminists, and network social movements as well as the ones for better living conditions, among others.

According to Ilse Scherer-Warren (2006), the reality of social movements is very dynamic and the theories have not always kept pace with its changes. With globalization and the growth of information of society, social movements in many countries, including Brazil and Latin America, are more diversified and complex. To her, paradigmatic or hegemonic explanations of studies carried out in the second half of the twentieth century need revisions or updates due to the emergence of new social or political scenarios.

In examining the latest theories of the social movement, such as the recognition theory

and the theory of deliberative democracy, Gohn (2008) analyzes studies of the late twentieth century and the new millennium (Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser, among others). She stresses that the theoretical production of the new millennium is faced with new social demands, new conflicts and forms of organization, all generated by changes in the last decades of the twentieth century, generally confined to the effects of globalization in its multiple facets.

New subjects have arisen, such as anti or alter-globalization movements. To Sociology, these movements are considered as new objects of investigation for breaking the barriers of nations and becoming not only international but also transnational. The analysis categories also change: social networks often play a more important role than the social movement as they become networks of social mobilization.

As emphasized by Gohn (2008), a complexity of issues covers the topic of social movements and there are still many gaps in this subject matter, as the concept of social movement itself. The broad use of this concept may interfere with its precision, which has become a concern within the researchers on the subject. There are still many questions which are perhaps in the nature of this phenomenon at present, such as: What distinguishes social movements or other collective actions from some social organizations? What happens when a class action expressed in a social movement is institutionalized?

With the rise of democratic regimes and the extension of participatory democracy, the social movements constituted part of the struggle for

recognition of rights as they were inserted in the struggle for deliberative democracy. The social movements have the ability to reorient the State action and its public policies. However, in exercising this function, the experts affirm that they must act as independent spaces, as agents autonomous in this process.

The concern with the autonomy of social movements in relation to the State is constituted as a relevant topic for analysis on the dynamics of current social movements and in the process of democratic consolidation. We observe that the limit between autonomy and cooptation would be the dilemma of social movements today.

Social Movements and Institutions in the Brazilian Democratization

The social movements have had an active presence in Brazil's democratization. These movements took singular profiles and characteristics in each stage of this process. However, the main goal of social movements was only the following: the conquest of democracy. In this sense, there was a change of direction in relation to social mobilization during the military regime, when the social movement was motivated by the idea of socialist revolution. In the new repertoire of the struggle for democracy the concept of *citizenship* was reintroduced. The new scenario of social struggle has been set for the defense of democracy and citizenship.¹

¹ Cf. WEFFORT, Francisco. **Por que Democracia?** São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1984. In this book, the author discusses according to the political situation the change of the concept of *socialism* to *democracy*.

In the process of democratization, whose climax was the movement by Direct Elections, the social institutions also changed and created a broader dialogue with the social movements. In that period, institutions have generally assimilated the spirit of change. The situation was related to the legitimacy of social movements concerning the more conservative sectors.

The Brazilian democratization came as a legacy of social struggle, even before the weakening and the end of the military regime (1964-1985). During this regime, the action of the social movement was expressive, like the youth movement in the late 1960s, the workers' strikes in the late 1970s and the movement for amnesty in 1979.

To analyze the relationship between social movements and institutions, we defined three distinct moments of the process of Brazilian democratization: the political transition, the National Constituent Assembly, and the new Constitutional order. In each one, the social movements will have singular features and they will have specific relations with social institutions, such as reciprocity or conflict.

The Political Transition: movement of *Diretas-Já*

In the late 1970s, “a distensão, lenta, gradual e segura”, denominated by the military regime, although showing depletion of the regime, expressed the pressure of social movements for democratic opening. The movement for direct presidential elections in the early 1984 catalyzed the mobilization for democracy.

The mobilization for *Diretas-Já* can be defined as a political movement. Bearing characteristics of a national demonstration, it involved thousands of people in street manifestations, especially in big cities. The movement of the *Diretas-Já* was the high point of the movement of democratization. In a short period of time, the movement had national acceptance, with the involvement of different segments of the population. It was gradually constituted in a national unanimity. In spite of its characteristics being of national mobilization, it had a sophisticated organization and structure.

At this moment, the left-wing parties were still illegal. They did not participate openly in the movement of *Diretas-Já*. Many of them also resisted changes through institutional channels, as they still lived with the idea of revolution. However, little by little, they started to adhere, openly or secretly, to the movement. The flags of these parties have fluttered in the streets.²

Cross-party committees organized the manifestations by direct election and opposition parties led them. These manifestations counted with the participation of social movements, social organizations, associations and unions, as well as membership of sectors of intellectuals, artists, priests, women, students, among others.

In the period of four months, the duration of the movement, a chain of manifestation across the country for direct elections was created. The public rallies in Rio de Janeiro, at Candelária, and

² The party reform of 1979 reintroduced the multiparty system, but the leftist parties have remained illegal until 1985.

in Sao Paulo, at vale do Anhangabaú, which closed the campaign, had more than one million people.

The movement of the *Diretas-Já* became the most popular manifestation during the military regime. It was motivated by a parliamentary initiative, a constitutional amendment, which depended on the approval of National Congress. The amendment authored by deputy Dante de Oliveira, by PMDB, was voted on April 25 and lost by only 22 votes in the House of Representatives. To be approved and forwarded to the Senate it needed the approval of two thirds of deputies. On count, 298 deputies voted in favor, 65 against and 3 abstained. Of the total, 112 members did not attend the plenary and the amendment needed 320 votes for approval.

Research polls indicated that eight out of ten Brazilians hoped that the Congress would approve the amendment. The elections for president were held indirectly in an Electoral College meeting on January 15, 1985, which elected Tancredo Neves as president and José Sarney as vice.

During the period of the movement for direct elections, a moment of huge national mobilization, the Brazilian civil society was heavily mobilized. In this context the social movements, trade associations and professional associations were revived. They were organized to act in the process of democratization. The social institutions, universities, schools, and the Church joined the movement for direct election.

At this moment, there was reciprocity between the actions of social movements and social institutions in favor of democratization. The

social movements guided the changes. The main agent of *Diretas-Já* was the civil society and the leadership was of opposition political parties, especially the PMDB, which was expressed by its leaders, prominent national figures, some of who returned from exile.

This social movement had as its single platform, the direct elections. The desired goal was political change of the political regime. There was a feeling of national congregation that brought together all participants in the same language: democracy.

The National Constituent Assembly (1987-1988)

On March 15, 1985, with the unexpected death of Tancredo Neves, the vice-president Jose Sarney assumed, who at the beginning of his government declared opened the process for conducting a National Constituent Assembly to elaborate the new Constitution. The society that had already been mobilized since the time of the movement for *Diretas-Já* continued the demonstrations in favor of a free and sovereign National Constituent Assembly, that meant the defense of a forum exclusively elected to write the Constitution.

The mobilizations of this period took different characteristics from those of the previous period. For even though they occurred nationally, they were more segmented according to the demands of social movements, of professional groups and of associations. The social movements during this period were organized according to their claims. During the year prior to the

Constituent Assembly, congress meetings, conferences, seminars were carried out to define the list of claims that would be taken to the constituents.

The Constituent Assembly as conceived by the social movements did not materialize. The Constituent Assembly approved by National Congress had a dual function: to elaborate the constitution and to exercise legislative functions. It was in fact a Constitutional Congress.

However, the decision about the character of the Constituent did not alter the level of civil society participation in this process. The 1986 elections for the choice of parliamentary constituencies took place in a broad process of mobilization. The elected National Congress exercised for nearly two years the function of the Constituent Assembly.

The Constituent Assembly became a forum for representing the diverse and contradictory interests of Brazilian society. This forum was turned into a scenario for manifestation of these interests due to their role in defining the normative principles of national life.

The rules of procedure of the Constituent Assembly provided in its first phase, the 24 subcommittees, and active participation of movements, organizations and civil society associations in the Public Hearings. Representatives of civil society, through these instances of organization, were the spokesmen of social interests. This period is set as the intense mobilization in the Constituent Assembly.

The common characteristics of this stage are: the intense participation of social movements,

organizations and associations; presentation of different platforms of demands; pressure on constituents to approve the proposals. These characteristics were present in different areas of activity, as education, science and technology, health, environment.

Among the representatives of civil society in the Constituent Assembly the social movement led by the Constitutional Forum in Defense of Public Education and Free (Fórum da Educação na Constituinte em defesa do Ensino Público e Gratuito), comprised of 14 national entities, stood out.³ In opposition to this platform, the National Federation of Private Institutions (Federação Nacional dos Estabelecimentos Privados) presented the platform of private schools. The associations representing the religious and philanthropic institutions, the Brazilian Association of Catholic Schools (Associação Brasileira de Escolas Católicas), the Association of

³ Signed the platform of the Forum for Education: the Associação Nacional de Educação (ANDE); the Associação Nacional de Docentes do Ensino Superior (ANDES); the Associação Nacional de Profissionais de Administração da Educação (ANPAE); the Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação (ANPED); the Centro de Estudos Educação e Sociedade (CEDES); the Federação Nacional de Orientadores Educacionais (FENOE); the União Brasileira de Estudantes Secundaristas (UBES); the Sociedade de Estudos e Atividades Filosóficas (SEAF); the Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores (CGT); the Confederação dos Professores do Brasil (CPB); the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT); the Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil (OAB); the União Nacional dos Estudantes (UNE); and the Federação das Associações dos Servidores das Universidades Brasileiras (FASUBRA). Cf. COELHO, Maria Francisca Pinheiro. **O público e o privado na educação brasileira: o conflito na Constituinte (1987-1988)**. Universidade de Brasília, Departamento de Sociologia, 1991. (mimeo.).

Community Schools (Associação de Escolas Comunitárias) and the National Campaign for Community Schools (Campanha Nacional de Escolas da Comunidade), had its own platform. Although they had participated in the Congress of the National Federation of Private Institutions, these entities had their own vision of the public and private problems and defended the concept of public as a non-governmental school.

The social forces mobilized in the area of education were different in terms of the understanding of education and in terms of platforms. This field has revived a historical conflict between the representatives of public education and private education. The conflict was expressed by all Constituent period. The articles approved reflect a solution of compromise between the parties in dispute, where each party won and lost some proposals.

In the Constituent Assembly process as a whole, there was an atmosphere of intense mobilization and conflict between the forces acting on the Constituent Assembly. However, even the more conservative groups had to move forward to the innovative spirit and the flag of change prevalent at the time. Despite the unfavorable balance of power within the Assembly, the most democratic groups won, with the expansion of individual and collective rights.

In the field of education, the Constitutional articles ensured the following demands of the conflictive groups: the definition of free public education at all levels was registered; the permanence of religious studies in elementary level in public schools as an optional subject; and the

possibility of transference of public funds to private schools.

The Constituent Assembly was a field of conflict between social movements of different hues, but the democratic orientation prevailed. The institutions have become more open and were renewed in the process of change. Social relationships were conflictive inside the Constituent Assembly, but the solutions have been marked by the action of social movements with democratic characteristics.

Unlike the time of political transition that was characterized by a unity of social movements in the Constituent Assembly are different social forces in dispute that will manifest themselves in defense of a platform of interests. Social movements in the Constitution took a more character of claims. His agents were groups of entities, associations and forums. The representatives of these struggle entities formed the leadership. The platforms were presented during the Public Hearings in the first phase of the Constituent Assembly. The relationships between social movements and institutions in this process were more of conflict than of reciprocity. The final solution was of compromise between the various conflicting groups.

The New Constitutional Order

The new Brazilian Constitution was approved on October 5, 1988. In the scenario of democratic institutions, there was a significant change in the relationship between social movements and institutions because of the

implementation of various demands of social movements in the Constitution.

In the democratic order, there was also a greater diversity of social movements and a decrease of their power to pressure. The social movements began to orient themselves according to their evaluation of the political forces in power. Three different practices of social movements can be identified in the political and institutional framework in the new Constitutional order: being assimilated by the new institutional framework; being an instance of opposition; being independent and dialogic.

In turn, the institutions tended to accommodate to the reality and even to assume outdated practices, especially political institutions. The relationship between social movement and the institution became of accommodation, conflict or negotiation. In fact, with the advent of democracy, old practices return to politics.

In this context, the problem of Political Reform, foreseen between the Constitutional reforms, is emblematic. The initiatives of civil society on the proposal for political reform are significant in this process. . The proposal does not find support in the National Congress in spite of being approved by society, as shown by opinion polls.

In the government of president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2007), a Plataforma dos Movimentos Sociais para a Reforma do Sistema Político⁴, released in 2005, and signed by 23 organizations, was in the political field an instance

of independence and autonomy that preserves the commitment with the democratic principles defended since the democratic transition.⁵ However, this platform, in a political legislative field of non-adherence to reform proposal, constitutes an isolated voice against the new institutionalism, compared with earlier times of change. In the parliamentary context, the exception is the Parliamentary Front in Defense of Political Reform that established a dialogue with social movements and pro-reform organizations.

The left-wing and center-left political parties, before united in the movement for direct elections and in the Constituent Assembly, once united by the movement for direct elections and by the Constituent Assembly, in the name of governability, guaranteed by the “presidencialismo de coalizão”, are not united nowadays to promote the reform in the political-electoral system that can improve political representation. The behavior of social movements to political reform is a continuation of previous struggles in pro-democracy. On the other hand, the attitude of the parties, including those who were participants in the process of democratic reconstruction, is of immobility and of obstacle to improve the political-electoral system.

In accordance with the Platform of Social Movements in defense of political reform, social movements, like the Movimento Contra a Corrupção Eleitoral (MCCE)⁶ and the project *Ficha Limpa*, an initiative of People's Amendment,

⁴ The Platform of Social Movements for Reform of Political System.

⁵ Cf. the list of entities that signed the Platform in bibliographical references.

⁶ Movement Against Corruption Elections.

approved by the Congress, which prohibits persons convicted by collegiate decisions of Justice to be candidates, play an important role of social pressure for political reform.⁷ The contributions of civil society regarding the content of a reform lead to an improvement of the quality of representative democracy.

However, not all proposals of pro-reform social movements are consensual, but the posture of the entities that are members of this struggle is to build a dialogue with the various sectors engaged in the process and even with the legislative power. Among the controversial proposals is the submitting of the approved reform to a popular referendum through plebiscite. Also controversial is the proposal to establish a Revisional Constituent Assembly to make a political reform, thus removing the prerogative of the Congress.

There is a disposition of establishing dialogue among the organizations that signed the Platform for Political Reform. The presence of this social movement in the debate on political reform represents an advance in the struggle for participatory democracy and the quality of political representation. However, political reform depends on how we combine different social representations and the creation of legislative majorities (MELO, 2006). However, the political institutions in relation to this matter do not dialogue much with social movements.

Committees, organizations, and associations groups that already have their own

organization constitute the agents of social movements of political pro-reform. The leaderships are the representatives of these organisms. In the case of the Platform of Social Movements for Reform of Political System there is a document with the proposed of Political Reform, signed by the entities that compose the movement, including the Movement Against Corruption Election, the Brazilian Association of ONGS and National Movement for Human Rights. The relationship between these movements with political institutions is more of pressure than of reciprocity and dialogue.

Final Remarks

In a socio-political field of democracy, permeated by freedom of speech and organization, there is a natural and perhaps necessary relationship between civic associations and political associations. These two kinds of association, civil and political, stimulate the creation and reproduction of manners, habits and democratic values. On the other hand, in authoritarian regimes, where political freedom does not exist, the civil association is rare.

When political association is based on free institutions, the political practice helps to generalize the taste and habit of the association. The political association develops and improves remarkably the civil association. These two dimensions of social life interact, but they are not

⁷ Lei da "Ficha Limpa" was approved in the Senate on May 19, 2010.

fused. The idea of the association and willingness to be associated create the habit of public life.⁸

The social action, whether individual or collective, spontaneous or organized, sets up the social life and its dynamics. Social movements and institutions are different ways of constituting the social system: social institutions, as being more stable and enduring and social movements, as having more free actions and more opened reflexively (GIDDENS, 2003).

As mentioned, the relationship between social movements and institutions can involve situations of reciprocity, tension or conflict. Episodes of collective social action are the first level of organization of social movements and this is one of the reasons why they are considered non-institutionalized. On the other hand, the social movement, the social institution constitutes a more normative of regularization of standards of conduct. Therefore, it has the power to moralize and normalize. As more permanent features of the social relation, the institutions are inclined to preserve the established order.

Although the distinctions are not so rigid, concrete studies have defined the extension of such distinctions and may suggest that while social movements tend to changing situations, social institutions are turning towards social control. Despite the possible similarities, social movement and social institution are defined by their differences.

In the process of rebuilding Brazil's democracy, the relations between social movements and institutions are given according to the phases of the democratization process, taking into consideration the behavior of social institutions and the position of social movements, rhythm, external control, and independent stance. The changes in institutions and social movements during this period and the relationship between them are matters of sociological relevance because they indicate the dynamic system, the approach or departure of these forms of constitution of the social system.

In the political transition, the relationship between social movement and institution took place in accordance with the stages of democratization process. In the National Constituent Assembly, the relationship was of conflict and reconciliation with the political hegemony of democratic forces. In the new Constitutional order there was the diversity of these relationships, which changed from dialogue to conflict, from assimilation to confrontation. Nowadays there is a certain distance and perplexity from social movements by the political institutions, creating a gap between the action of social movements and the actions of the Parliament.

By the level of civil society participation in the manifestations during the process of democratization in Brazil we cannot conclude that there is a lack of interest of the Brazilian people towards public life. There is a stereotype of them as apolitical people that do not correspond to reality. The image remains as a tradition, despite the expansion of civil society participation in

⁸ Cf. TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis de. *A democracia na América*. Belo Horizonte: Ed. Itatiaia; São Paulo: Ed. Universidade de São Paulo, 1977.

public life. A look at political participation in Brazil in the last three decades shows a growing process of forming an independent public opinion and will.

Movements such as the amnesty in 1979, even during the military government, the campaign for direct elections in 1984, the National Constituent Assembly (1987-1988), presidential campaigns, which mobilize thousands of participants, are references that indicate that the politics occupy an important place in Brazilian life. Every two years the society is mobilized in electoral processes (COELHO, 1991; COELHO, 1994).

The answer about the relationship between social movements and democracy based on the analysis of the Brazilian democratization period indicates the existence of an affinity of the practice political of social movements and the democracy. Social movements in the country were able to reorient the state and its public policy to the social interests. In fact, the answer about the relationship between social movements and democracy should be given based on analysis and specific studies.

For the three examples examined in this study, we could say that there was an identity of movement of the *Diretas-Já*, of the *Fórum da Educação na Constituinte em defesa do Ensino Público e Gratuito* and of the *Plataforma dos Movimentos Sociais para a Reforma do Sistema Político* with the democratic process. These social movements have shown a link of Brazilian political culture with the civil association with the public life.

In the attempt to classify social movements in the three periods studied, we would say that in the political transition they have assumed a political character; in the National Constituent Assembly they were particularly reivindicatives; and in the new Constitutional Order they are more political too. However, all of them have a strong link with democracy.

The concept of a social movement was used in this work with reference to all these movements even though sometimes we refer more about mobilizations and campaigns than social movements as the case of *Diretas-Já*. However, we opted for the concept of social movement as mentioned by the organizers of this struggle.

For Touraine (2006), although one should not apply the notion of social movements to any type of collective action, the use of the concept is important to cover the phenomena of creation and preservation of social spheres, as well as reconstruction of social ties nowadays. It is necessary to keep the reference to the notion of social movement in the study of society. In a similar sense to Scherer-Warren (2006), the new utopia of activism is the defense of democracy in diversity.

We apply here this concept for movements with a direct relationship to democracy in Brazil. We observed that the use of this category has always been plural, to cover a variety of collective actions, both in the past, referring to the labor movement, the movement of class, as at present, when referring to citizenship and rights. Probably in the contemporary world the category of social movement has received a more analytical than a

historical treatment. The diversity of social movements today requires a need for further characterization of its manifestations. However, it is hard not to think about all these events as social movements.

In Brazil, the representativeness and legitimacy of the demands of social movements must be understood in the field of democracy and its challenges. The analysis of forms of associations in social life is introduced as a central theme in the sociological researches. The association would be at the base of democratic processes, although it is not always encouraged by the culture as part of organization of civil life.

The analysis on the associations as a part of civil life refers to the relationship between civil and political associations. Tocqueville (1977) referred to this relationship by comparing types of democracy. When inquiring about the nature of democracy, the author analyzes the relationship between the two types of association, civil and political, and describes how they interrelate and reinforce each other. He points out that when a nation has a public life, the idea of association and willingness to associate present themselves every day to the spirit of all citizens.

In this sense, politics generalizes the taste and habit of association and teaches the art of doing so to the whole society. This understanding of politics as a decentralized vision of public life and that requires an active civil life also resembles Hannah Arendt's (1999) notion of public happiness, which is a dimension of the human condition being only developed with the experience of participation in public life.

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