

Chapter 17

Orientation for Results: Focus on Knowledge and Popular Participation

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is a field study of bibliographic nature and quantitative method. Data was obtained through the application of a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 200 people living in São Luís-MA-Brazil. The objective was to evaluate citizens' knowledge of laws, legal instruments, and the exercise of citizenship in relation to popular participation in the Master Plan. It has theoretical foundation in the research of Carreira et al., applied in Portugal, focusing on the democratic approach and in the definitions of knowledge and citizen involvement to achieve good results. The analysis concluded that there is low popular participation, in the order of 10.5%, especially among the younger and less educated, as well as frail knowledge about laws and legal instruments.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to evaluate the extent to which the citizens of São Luís-MA-Brazil understand and effectively exercise their right to citizenship in relation to public participation in the territorial planning plan.

In this aspect, knowledge of information (Enshassi & Kullab, 2014) and societal involvement are considered fundamental to obtain good results (Wang & Van Wart, 2007; Manaf, Mohamed e Lawton, 2016), because ignorance and low participation affect the performance of government towards society, including the scope of public policies geared to territorial planning that are of general interest.

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This lack of knowledge is reflected in recent reports by the Organization of Economic Unity and Organization for Economic Development cooperation, where it was pointed out those social factors related to the level of education, age, access to information, etc. may reflect the low participation (ONUBR, 2015 OECD, 2015). These factors can also affect the decision-making process in public administration and corporate performance.

Combined with the excess of legal norms and, as Bazolli and Delgado (2016, p.9) affirms, the fact that “society is not being called to participate effectively in the construction of urban plans,” the loss to society be irreparable.

Specifically, the main concepts of the academy for participation, legal instruments (Kleba et al., 2015, Manaf et al., 2016) and participation, under the theoretical aspects of the democratic approach supported in the Brazilian Constitution (Brazil, 1988), among others, in the positions of Hafer and Ran (2016), which consider participation as an opportunity for employees to take advantage of citizens’ knowledge to help solve complex social problems; according to Carreira, Machado and Vasconcelos (2016), when they understand that the objective of participation is to encourage citizens to contribute to the decision-making process of the different political centers, ensuring that decisions contemplate collective interests and stimulate the exercise of citizenship.

However, it should be pointed out that the research is directed to the knowledge and participation of the territorial planning plan, Law nº 10,257 of the City Statute (2001) and Master Plan of São Luís-MA-Brazil, Municipal Law, nº 4,669, of October 2006. The statute, because it is the first legal instrument that covers Brazilian territorial planning, and has as its guideline the democratic management based on popular participation and the MMP (Municipality Master Plan) of São Luís because besides being subordinated to and provided for in the bylaws, it has as a guideline, reference to participative management.

In this context, it considers the positions of Serafim and Ricci (2017) that sustain that it is through the instrument of Territorial Planning that society, public agents and citizens, carry out urban planning and manifest themselves for the construction of a developed and egalitarian city, emphasizing that it is through municipal master plans that public participation must be built.

Initially, bibliographical surveys were carried out (Gil, 2008), resorting to the literature published in periodicals and magazines of national and international relevance. They also used books, laws and other normative documents to understand concepts and legislation that focuses on the subject, thus providing a complete interaction of the researcher with the environment in which the research was developed.

In order to obtain the data, the social profile (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2010; Brazilian Supreme Electoral Court, 2016) of citizens who know laws, legal instruments and, especially of the territorial planning of São Luís-MA will be analyzed, in order to identify active and passive citizens (Carreira, et al., 2016) and it has been shown that the problem of trivial public participation in the territorial planning process is due to the citizens’ lack of familiarity with the laws and legal instruments of the territory (Carreira, et al., 2016; Figueiredo & Santos, 2014, Kleba, Comerlatto, & Frozza, 2015). The study revealed that the minor participation is present in the younger social profile and low level of education groups. However, in general it was considered low, in the order of 10.5%.

The data was obtained in a field survey, conducted through the use of questionnaires, elaborated on the *Google Forms* platform, containing closed questions, with response options guided by the *Likert* Scale, applied directly to the citizens of the region of São Luís, capital city of the State of Maranhão, in Brazil. The city was chosen because has an excess of one million inhabitants and has cosmopolitan characteristics, which leads us to believe that its citizens have some knowledge of citizen participation, in addition, it is the city where the researcher resides, which made it easier to collect data.

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