PARTICIPACIÓN SOCIAL EN LAS DECISIONES DE POLÍTICA TURÍSTICA: DIFICULTADES Y POSIBILIDADES - ANÁLISIS DE UN CONSEJO DE TURISMO DE BRASIL SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM POLICY DECISIONS: DIFFICULTIES AND POSSIBILITIES – ANALYSIS OF A BRAZILIAN TOURISM COUNCIL

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RESUMEN:

En los últimos años, la comunidad ha reconocido a los consejos de políticas públicas como ámbitos esenciales y útiles para el debate sobre el desarrollo local y regional, pero el proceso sigue siendo frágil. Como tal, el presente artículo objetiva destacar los desafíos y las posibilidades de la participación social en las decisiones de política turística centradas en el Consejo de Turismo del Estado de Rio Grande do Norte (Conetur) en Brasil. Es un estudio cualitativo que recopiló datos documentales y bibliográficos, realizó entrevistas con miembros del consejo y realizó análisis de contenido. Los principales hallazgos revelan que las barreras para la participación social en las decisiones de política están directamente relacionadas con la historia de la gestión del turismo en Brasil y que estas pueden y deben aliviarse con dos soluciones propuestas aquí: reforzar las políticas democráticas y la autoestima de la sociedad. Podemos lograr esto mejorando los sistemas de gestión pública, que son parte de un contexto democrático de políticas públicas actualmente desacreditado por ser costoso.

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Palabras clave: participación social, consejo de administración, gobernanza turística, dificultades y posibilidades, Conetur.

ABSTRACT:
In recent years, the community has recognized public policy councils as essential and useful arenas for debate regarding local and regional development, but the process remains tenuous. As such, the present article aimed to highlight the challenges and possibilities of social participation in tourism policy decisions focusing on the State Tourism Council of Rio Grande do Norte (Conetur) in Brazil. It is a qualitative study that collected documental and bibliographic data, conducted interviews with council members and, performed content analysis. The main findings reveal that barriers to social participation in policy decisions are directly related to the history of tourism management in Brazil and that these can and should be relieved by two solutions proposed here: reinforcing democratic policies and self-esteem. We can achieve this by improving public management systems, which are part of a democratic public policy context currently discredited for being expensive.
Keywords: social participation, management council, tourism governance, difficulties and possibilities, Conetur.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social participation is a sine qua non in the contemporary representative democracy process. To participate is to take part in a process and, in this case, public policies. The human factor is consistent with the development of public policies but is considered peripheral in this process (Baum, 1994).

Therefore, in the 1970s in Brazil, despite the existence of a political-administrative context that regulated and, in some cases, hindered the processes of social participation, a new configuration of social fabric emerged and enabled the development of social movements. For public management, keeping society happy was better than keeping it engaged.

However, society has always sought ways to be organized and fight for its rights by developing different sorts of protest, including formal means such as elections or informal approaches. Workers, for instance, have learned to go on strikes. Peasants, to invade private property. Students, to protest and so on (Rocha, 2008).

This dialectical relationship permeates social relations, making it complex as these processes go beyond technical and operational aspects and involve social, economic, cultural, and political issues (Dodds & Butler, 2010; Souza & Rodrigues, 2004).

The 1980s were marked by increasing concern in Brazil and worldwide regarding the inclusion of social participation in public decisions (Almeida García, Balbuena Vázquez, & Cortés Macías, 2015; Seki, 2013). In Brazil, the 1988 Federal Constitution created new decentralized institutions to govern the country's policies. These changes resulted in the progressive implementation of several participation mechanisms, such as councils and social forums.

Planning and Tourism management has accompanied this new institutional restructuring process since the 1990s, with decentralized ideas, although at a slow pace. Its first initiatives were under the auspices of a public tourism policy that believed local actors should plan tourism activity by considering their problematics and realities. So, a process of awareness, awareness-raising, stimulation, and capacity of the community began so that, in an organized and planned manner, they could think of the tourism of their localities.

These initiatives validated the importance of tourism, which made it possible to regulate the Ministry of Tourism in Brazil in 2003 with a series of measures that were implemented by the authorities, aiming at this new context of policy formulation and social circumstances. Among them, we can mention the Tourism Regionalization Program (PRT), which arises in response to this new reality, having as its strategy a joint work of structuring and promoting tourism in the national scenario, considering above all, the local singularities. The core of the program is the decentralization of actions, valorization of participation, and revaluation of the territory and places through a structured logic in regions (Coutinho & Azevedo, 2019; Fonseca, 2012).

Therefore, the program proposes the institutionalization of government bodies which can present various formats such as forums, councils, associations, among others, as a participatory management model. In this model, planning and management actions should be discussed and implemented by multiple representative actors, who have common goals. The program suggests that the existing instances should be strengthened, and where there are not these instances, then, they should be created. Consequently, several institutions were created in this new planning model in various governing spheres as a collective work effort.

However, despite all the institutional changes experienced in recent years through the creation of instruments that included society in public planning, we can still observe slight frailties of this process. As the spread of development models with merely economic focus from the structuring of commercial tour itineraries that do not guarantee sufficient local profits, based on public consultation (in opposition to deliberative systems). These elements provide the aggregation

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of individual preferences and increase the discouragement of participation (Brandão, Baldi, & Alban, 2014; Nóbrega, 2012). This context is marked by contradictions that a democracy experiences, hindering controlled, open debate with participatory decisions.

The advances and changes in political conduct are undeniable, but it is unclear if these mechanisms have indeed contributed to consolidating a democratic and more participatory management structure on a broader context of social transformations (Bordenave, 1994; González & Tretin, 2014).

As such, the present article aimed to highlight the difficulties and possibilities of social participation in political decisions, focusing on the State Tourism Council of Rio Grande do Norte (Conetur/Brazil). The entity was created in 1989 (Decree no. 10.386) and reformulated in 2003 by national policy (Tourism Regionalization Program – Decree no. 17.276). Its objective is to discuss tourism planning and management actions through the participation of different representative players.

2. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DECISIONS: MANAGEMENT COUNCILS IN BRAZIL

Public participation in planning aims to contribute to decision making and benefit local development (Tosun, 2000; Valente, Dredge, & Lohmann, 2015). It starts from the assumption that the more involved citizens are, the higher the likelihood of successful policies (Baum, 1994; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Wan & Bramwell, 2015).

However, this management model that begins to incorporate the society into the planning and management process has recent traits — being associated, on the one side, to a growing industrial and financial monopoly, where local administrative power has also reduced its role with influences by multinational bodies. On the other, there is increasing pressure from society, creating a social demand.

Thus, the institutionalization of governance bodies, including management councils, has emerged to address a social question (social demand), an administrative issue (capacity of governance) and a political factor, due to pressure from multinational entities, which, in many cases, fund local actions (Alió & Jori, 2011; Estol & Font, 2016; Zazueta & Mercado-Celis, 2019).

Opposing universal logic, Tang (2017) conducted a study in China showing that public policy and planning strategies should consider internal problems and focus less on the macro scale, promoting cooperation and consistent policies aligned with national economic and social issues.

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However, Garcia (2014) and Estol & Font (2016) found that Latin American tourism development is concentrated on the economic factor as the primary reason to boost activity, marked by intense political intervention and weak social involvement. The focus is to support private domestic and international companies with a large amount of capital to create a reliable and economically sustainable tourist market.

Given the current global scenario and the pressure faced by public administration, some countries have structured their management towards political decentralization at several government levels (Amore & Hall, 2016; Estol & Font, 2016; Hernandez-Ramirez, 2017; Valente et al., 2015).

In Brazil, the discussion about the process of coordination regarding political decentralization occurs on the capacity of local leaders, since the management model implied greater local responsibilities without due capacity (Arretche, 1996), hence initiating a dispute over local elite by assigning positions in search of supporters to strengthen themselves politically (Coutinho & Nóbrega, 2019).

However, as the literature points out, such an imposing structure, managed by a top-down process did not bring about a change, in fact, in local structures, which with little recourse from the most diverse sources (financial, technical and operational) had to direct decision-making processes (Brandão et al., 2014; Nóbrega, 2012).

The focus of the policy is not on the participation of the actors, but instead, on the issues of the local economy, enabling specific actors to be configured with higher voice power and propositions. With this, it allowed the emphasis on private representatives who, through these democratic channels, legitimate the actions supported in interventions and the inclusion of proposals.

According to Brandão, Baldi & Alban (2014), the participation of the network of national players in tourism planning in Brazil emphasizes private representatives, due to a large number of interventions and inclusion of their discussions in tourism policies. The authors also reveal that, although the decentralization model has paved the way for participatory management, it has also reduced state power in favor of the market, which was consolidated as one of the central players with the most significant influence on national tourism plans in Brazil.

It corroborates Gonzalez & Tretin (2014), who report government entities reduced their participation in tourism policy decisions, but the government did not renounce the hierarchical paradigm on the network of social players. This governmental hierarchical posture requires a political and organizational change based on intergovernmental relationships. It is crucial to strengthen the institutional

capabilities of each municipal government that ensure efficient and effective management.

This restructuring in the management model must be thought from the existing social pluralism far from the pressures of models postulated by the process of globalization, defined in the literature as top-down or bottom-up, and approaching more hybrid management that provides legitimacy of power (Pimentel, Emmendoerfer, & Tomazzoni, 2014; Valente et al., 2015; Wan & Bramwell, 2015).

Coordinating the development process, primarily in terms of political decentralization, is considered an ideal form of management and structural integration since it strengthens horizontal and vertical relations (González & Tretin, 2014). Thus, since it is directly related to the objective of ensuring tourist development, public policy planning has begun to consistently incorporate the notion of participation, whereby consolidating a sense of belonging and collective responsibility encourages the creation of social participation spaces, such as management councils, social policy-making forums, and participatory actions, among others.

This dynamic, as advocated in the literature, must obey an equitable logic of representations, avoiding overlapping speech and actions. In this sense, Schneider (2005) and Nóbrega (2012) report that members should be uniformly represented in order to serve the interests of everyone, proposing a balance between the sectors represented, thus, 33.3% representatives of the public sector, 33, 3% from the private sector and 33.3% from the third sector. Thus, it is essential to create innovative surroundings when establishing a network, such as management councils, which can and should influence the environment to reach these goals (Barquero, 2001).

The discussions on the literature, so far, reveal readings about institutional normativeness, with a focus on the role of the state and its institutions, which enable broad societal participation in political decisions. These issues encompass the context of globalization, the need for decentralization, and, therefore, of coordinative measures aimed at the equality of propositions and representations.

Hence, beyond the structural aspects of social participation, the authors reveal that in addition to coordination in the process of political decentralization, there must be social cooperation.

Although it is not an easy task, Seki (2013) underscores that social cooperation in preparing and implementing public policies allows a new form of organization that guarantees their effectiveness. The literature reports that citizens should be both informed and mobilized in the participation process,

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which involves technical, social, political, and cultural questions that require broad participation (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Dodds & Butler, 2010)

So, it is vital to involve competent people, who provide an environment that instills confidence, civic guidelines, and solidarity among its members, far from the direct influence of external pressures, democratically and horizontally (Putnam, 2004). These representatives should be chosen based on the plurality of ideas and representations, which through a relationship and interaction, will enable the consolidation of a democratic process within these institutions (Frey, 2007; Wan & Bramwell, 2015).

It is worth highlighting the antagonistic character of the participatory process, characterized by one side of integration, dialogue, and approximation to achieve common goals, and on the other, competition, individualism, and intolerance benefiting large economic groups (Alió & Jori, 2011; Rhodes, 2007). With this, the involvement will be due to the need to share various resources in pursuit of a common goal (Erkus-Ozturk & Eraydin, 2010; Rovere, 1999; Tosun, 2000).

These players must have interdependence relations managed by an autonomous, voluntary, and dynamic process. Therefore, there is no matrix of processes for the accomplishment of actions. They occur through horizontal relationships in harmony with the force that it projects on the network. However, some authors (Coutinho & Nóbrega, 2019; Wan & Bramwell, 2015) report that participation is conditioned by the position of the other players, and, based on this, each one will define their posture in acting.

Moreover, the degree to which consensus emerges is another issue in these structures, as there are different points of view. Inequalities and acceptance of limitations will converge to the acceptance of the peer. Mediation is needed to reach a common understanding (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999).

Thus, it is understood that the discussion on the literature about social participation in the political decision-making process, considering the context of the management councils, addresses two significant dimensions of analysis. The first focuses on structural aspects, which refer to the rules and institutional norms that, in the Brazilian case, have a strong influence over the Brazilian state. Those actions emerge in a decentralizing context and were discussed over a management model, which is coordinative, collaborative, and with an emphasis on internal contradictions.

The second dimension addresses the relationship of the various actors in this decision-making process, recognizing their plurality and, therefore, the relationships of interdependence, involvement in the network, and consensus in decisions. These dimensions contributed to revealing, through

a theoretical framework, the questions that direct their results, as it follows:

   a) Who are the key actors in this democratic process of council formation? (Political/Institutional Dimension)

   b) What are the structure and rules that direct the actions? (Political/Institutional Dimension)

   c) How often do meetings take place? (Political/Institutional Dimension)

   d) How are the representations chosen? (Dimension of actor relations)

   e) What are the discussions, and who propose them? (Dimension of actor relations)

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

   As a basic understanding of research that reveals the researcher's viewpoint, we classify this research as theoretical-empirical, and it adopts the dialectical method, which allows analyzing the scenario using reality itself as an argument, that is confronting the theory (which norms, speeches, and reports state) with their empiricism (the operationalization and implementation).

   The dialectic method presupposes the existence of the world in two diverging poles that are inseparable for the analysis of its contradictions (Severino, 2016). Thus, we used this method to understand how, in a centralized and highly vertical context, as advocated by the history of Brazilian politics, it creates promulgation of democratization.

   For this purpose, we initially used bibliographic research to generate support for the reflections made here using the methodological process developed by Ensslin et al. (2010) called ProKnow-C - Knowledge Development Process-Constructivist. The database selected was high impact tourism scientific journals, classified by the Coordination of Higher Level Improvement (Capes) in the scope from A1 to B1.

   After a long study of the adhesion of the keywords, the following names were adopted: Social participation, Political decisions in tourism, and public tourism policies. These words were examined in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, which were discussed in the theoretical framework. It is essential to consider that, concurrently with this bibliographic search, we used literature based on books by classic authors that approach the theme with sources, both from the internet and essential libraries.

   The research interest is in the understanding of how their guiding documents are managing these participatory structures. These documents portray their format or institutional design or both, and how well these institutions can fulfill the promises that motivated their creation. To this end, a documentary

database based on the Council's Rules of Procedure of 2009 was used, as this is the most recent one that denotes its process of reformulation and definition of the structure. Besides the minutes of the regular and extraordinary meetings, from 2007 to 2015, to understand the dynamics of speeches, propositions, relationships, results, and directions established by the board's relationship. We analyzed a total of fifty-three minutes of the meetings, which were made available by the responsible secretary. This model justifies the choice of time-lapse.

The non-participant observation was also used, by including a researcher at the meetings. Thus, the researcher acted only as an interested spectator who, based on the study objectives, sought to observe and record as many occurrences as possible that were relevant to the study (Godoy, 1995).

Thus, although the researcher was immersed in some realities of governance instances instituted in their most diverse spheres in the Brazilian context, one could not deal with each of them at great length, due to the peculiarity of each territory. Thus, as a research strategy, a case study was used. It consists of an analysis of specific networks whose focus is on the participants of the decision-making process of the state tourism network of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. These individuals are members of the State Tourism Council of Rio Grande do Norte (RN), which became the object of investigation.

The Council, as an instance of governance, must be established with the representation of the most diverse spheres. Thus, Conetur has thirty-five representatives divided between the private sector, the public sector, and the third sector. Moreover, it is crucial to consider that there are other instances of governance in the state in other spheres following the same formatting structure. However, according to the Brazilian management model, decisions of the tourism planning and management process of Rio Grande do Norte must pass through this instance to direct actions at the national level. According to the founding regiment, the choice of council members occurs for its representativeness, mainly economic, to the state. Because these members have the domain and knowledge of the subjected area, besides being the result of public tourism policy, and they were tangled in this relationship.

Thus, to launch a discussion beyond the normative documents, we conducted an interview based on a script, structured from literature discussions with the thirty-five representatives, which allowed a plural analysis through the relations and processes of different content. The interviews were conducted in 2015. This compilation focuses not only on the actors who participate in the political decision-making process but also on their relationships to fulfill their objective.

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The interviews were previously scheduled and held outside the work environment, namely, the collegiate meetings, so that the interviewees could talk openly about the elaborated questions. Each session lasted between thirty-five minutes and one hour and twenty minutes, and was recorded with the appropriate consent for the preservation of scientific rigor and later transcribed using codes for data analysis. Thus, it was established as follows: Private/Economic sector = ES, Public sector = PS and Third sector = TS.

Structured content analysis was then carried out, seeking the types of structures when coding interview responses, based on the various data collection sources that merged documents and speeches performing a pre-analysis through a fluctuating reading and matching the search problem; an investigation of the material, coding through some categories, and; data processing and inference with understanding and interpretation. Therefore, we sought types of structures in the coding of the responses of each document obeying the two dimensions that were discussed in the literature, composed by the steps shown in table 1.

Table 1. Methodological categories of analysis

a) Functioning structure

b) Frequency of meetings and their venue

c) Number of members and parity

d) Mandate and possibility of reelecting members

e) How the councilors' entities of origin are selected

f) Who are the presidents of the council and how they are elected

g) Who proposes the content of the meetings and how decisions are reached

h) What types of discussions are held and the extent of their quality

Source: Research data.

This analysis focuses in understanding how well the institutions created to manage a participatory and democratic process can fulfill the promises that motivated their origins, besides that, to understand how the process of formation of the network of actors from its relations, speeches, and referrals that are uttered from this set occurs. So, based on the contents obtained, the data were triangulated (documents, bibliography, and interviews) for validation, producing reliable answers to conduct the proposed research and making it possible to understand the structure and functioning of the state tourism network in Brazil.

4. REVEALING THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION SCENARIO IN RIO GRANDE DO NORTE

The last 40 years have seen the implementation of a new strategy for formulating policy based on decentralization, directly associated with new democratic forms, resulting from pressure from different sectors. However, the institutional capacity of each municipal government has not been monitored, which would broaden understanding of this new scenario.

The focus has become the dispute among local elites instead of a new institutional arrangement that would allow greater autonomy for municipalities to implement measures without depending on the federal government. Brazilian democracy is still fragile and unstable, requiring a strengthening of its foundations and dissemination of a new culture based on equality and respect. As such, the decentralization process has emerged in the form of different centralized governments, expanding the functions of the government through regulation and without strengthening its administrative and institutional capabilities.

It is in this scenario that several instances of governance emerge to manage participatory processes considering local realities. Thus, when explicitly analyzing the State Tourism Council - Conetur, we will do two types of analysis considering the data collection and the dimensions defined in the literature.

The first analysis refers to the reading of its rules and operating documents. For this, we analyzed Conetur Internal Rules, minutes of meetings, and some interviews with its members that reveal its institutional structure and the design that was made for this purpose. Furthermore, the second analysis refers to the reading and interpretation of the relationships between the actors participating in the network do Conetur, and how this relationship influences the participatory and democratic context. These studies will focus on the minutes of the meetings and the interviews that portrayed this theme.

Thus, the State Tourism Council (Conetur) is defined as a public advisory body directly linked to the State Tourism Department (Setur) and operates in the following procedures according to its normative document. Ordinary meetings occur every two months and extraordinary encounters when called by the president. The venue alternates among the different institutions that make up the council to increase the commitment of council members and lower costs. However, documentary analysis shows a variation in meeting regularity, ranging from two to eight encounters a year during the period analyzed. It is essential to underscore that meetings occurred

mainly in the capital, with only one held in another location (Rio Grande do Norte, 2009).

This data reveals that its normative document does not end up addressing the practical issues of the council, with a gap between the intended and the achieved. It is local dynamics that will set the tone for participatory development actions. It is understood that it is not the institutional norms that define the participatory context but are indicative of a structural change that has in its historical course a recent democracy that, through a pressure of the globalization process and the emergence of social activism, creates participatory spaces are, without, in many cases, considering the internal aspects (Tang, 2017).

As an endorsing of this discussion, the interviewees reveal that the Brazilian decentralization process expresses still very centralized characteristics through a structure that legitimates a powerful political intervention, where there are restricted autonomy and freedom of speech.

> I understand that we are at the mercy of Brasilia. The local program's team is very interested and dedicated and wants to do the action, but if the federal government does not invest in the local program, nothing will change. Everything depends on federal funds, and very little of it comes this way (ES - 03).
> So I ask you: does Conetur exist because it is a federal requirement? How is it pertinent? There is no local money and no team to do what we plan. So, it is hard for us to fulfill our obligations. We have to know the reason why things are being done (TS - 01).

By concatenating the information about what its normative document foresees together with its operationalization and the speeches of local players, we understood that the participatory process remains concentrated by vertical management in tourism management. Therefore, it does not allow the expansion of local capacities for the formation of a favorable environment, legitimizing a political dependence on the actions of the tourism sector.

According to document analysis, its management is and has always been the responsibility of the State Tourism Department, which, in addition to indicating a monopoly, goes against the representative principle concerning the other segments represented in the council, configuring centralized and poorly coordinated power (González & Tretin, 2014; Dias & Matos, 2014).

It is critical to consider that if the head of the department changes, the council is affected, which may indicate the discontinuity of meeting occurrence. Interviewed also state that:

> If management is bold, creative, full of vigor and good ideas, effective and efficient, so will the department and the measures

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> adopted. Otherwise, nothing will happen. So, we cannot say: what are the features of a council? A council is as good as its manager, which is the one who leads and sets the tone (ES - 07).
> It will depend a lot on the strength of each manager, the current president, or the effort of each council member. Discussions aim to fill gaps and comply with the directives of the Ministry of Tourism; in other words, we do it because we have to. The results of this process have been jeopardized by a lack of effort (SP - 12).

Despite revealing the importance of the participatory context, the coordination of actions ends up indicating the personalism, typical of fragile democracies, hindering interdependent and autonomous administration in the decision-making processes of the local planning and management.

This political model entails many risks. Society is waiting for new directions and changes in an attempt to solve problems. However, there is a need for organization, participation in the political game, discussing, and proposing solutions – and the councils should be the forum for this. Otherwise, Brazil will be waiting for institutionalized political heroes who will never arrive. The establishment of an influential and engaged society is one of the features that may discredit this historical game of formulating policy.

Proceeding with Conetur analysis, its structure consists of the members, a board of directors, and special commissions, but the latter were extinct a few years ago. The council defines its practice in 35 representatives among them 15 from the public, 15 from the private, and only five from the third sector. There are different ways to elect the members of each segment. The public sector consists of administrative managers: the private sector of individuals appointed from the tourist industry and the third sector of people involved in tourism activities and approved by the other sectors involved. It indicates that representatives of government and private enterprises are over-represented, defining, in many cases, the capacity of each actor in participatory processes (Nóbrega, 2012).

Concerning social participation in the country, its founding charter states that the council should be a transparent social participation mechanism in developing tourist activities. Thus, it acts as a forum for discussion, consensus, and deliberation, ensuring the selection process of its members, in addition to disseminating activities in the media.

Thus, considering the first dimension of analysis, it appears that the structural and normative aspects of Conetur politics present distinctions of a centralized, personalistic, and poorly coordinating process of actions, not resulting in the choice of equitable representativeness. Moreover, there is disagreement between what its normative document foresees and the council's modus operandi, therefore requiring the return to the structural bases of the discussion of participatory

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processes, rather than the imposition of a globalized context. These contradictions are displayed in table 2.

Table 2. Dynamics and organization of the tourism council.

Dimensions of analysis	Operationalization
Functioning structure	▪ Board of directors and members, According to the current management profile;
Frequency and location of the meetings	▪ According to the current management profile; ▪ Generally at the same location (state capital)
The mandate of members and reelection possibility	▪ Dependent on the |State Tourist Board, and when this changes, so does council management.
How the entities of origin of the members are selected	▪ By appointment, voting or inscription/candidacy;
Who the presidents of the council are and how they are elected	▪ Always from the State Tourist Board; ▪ Selected by nomination

Source: Research data.

Based on this first panorama, we proceed with the analysis of factors that portray the connection regarding the actors and the results obtained through this synergy. It parts from the understanding that public policy councils are participation mechanisms that promote more powerful democratic relations. They are a way to defeat the arbitrary mandate of the few to ensure visibility in popular participation processes.

Through its representatives, the council is responsible for changing this centralized culture based on an organizational framework that leads to discussions and action planning, integrating sectors, and benefiting each one. Its institutionalization is guaranteed by law, but its existence should transcend obligation, making it more effective and efficient. The representatives should set the tone by being active and engaged. There is no matrix to start taking action (Frey, 2007; Putnam, 2004; Wan & Bramwell, 2015). Thus, to understand the propositions of each actor and the operational dynamics of the council, we analyzed whom actor proposes the

guidelines each meeting and how decisions are defined after debates on the meetings.

The guidelines are built together with all the members. It is the responsibility of the secretary to abide or even discard them. Decisions, on the other hand, are taken by the majority of votes of the present counselors, and the chairman, besides voting, is the tie-breaker.

Although the agenda is established jointly and every participant votes, the president defines the actions. In many cases, the president interferes or impose decisions or both, as attested by the reading of the minutes. What is possible to notice is the capability of propositioning by the councilors is yet shallow, occurring only in specific situations, when summoned. Hence, the councilors have more voice than propositioning power, which means, although councils are spaces of opportunity for expression, it is still the state that holds the centrality manifested in most topics for debate. Much is said, and little is proposed for more effective actions. These relationships were also found in the interviews:

> Because while we are technically not the ones making the decisions at the same time, we still are. We are not the leaders, just participants, co-authors of this process, and as a co-author, it is clear that I push more for my representation (ES - 04)
> We intermediate for Conetur in our region. When we had these 5-minute meetings, I led the discussion; otherwise, I just listened (TS – 05).

These interviews reveal that some of the entities represented in the council do not recognize the role and strength that they can attain when united (even considering the over-representation of some groups). Although the council legitimizing the tourism sector actions and the importance as a collective is a consensus, there is also a criticizing tendency without participating in the process. The attitude is to be reactive to the problems of tourism, and the role that it represents is specific or insignificant. There are only minimal effort and interest in the search for action and particular concerns, neglecting the power of mutual cooperation.

Aiming to deepen and correlate these findings, we have made readings on the type of discussions that contribute to verify, among other factors, the degree of effectiveness of the council, and indicate the degree of influence on policy formulation and public control regarding the actions of the State. We identified that the most widely discussed issues are related to projects and the proposed activities, generally indicating a low level of effectiveness, given that the decisions cause less impact on policies. The choice of topics and days the meetings are held is democratic, as is the voting process and presentation of ideas. However, they do not result in practical and primarily autonomous actions.

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So, although Brazilian law favors the participation of society in policy decisions, it is marked by subjectivity since it focuses on people. As a result, it can be interpreted in different ways in different contexts.

However, the mechanisms usually employed are not very motivating (long and ineffective meetings with little or no resource to act, and debates with no practical effects), culminating in a lack of motivation and political and social gaps, since citizens are not involved.

On the other hand, people who want and tend to take part in it actively do not recognize its subjectivity. It is also essential to consider that the growth models promoted by public administration are aimed at obsessive consumption, linked to a quantitative approach, creating a new obstacle to subjective participation.

Thus, a set of obstacles has emerged caused by a slow and onerous bureaucratic process consisting of a cultural apparatus characterized by standard public management behavior, in conjunction with low technical capacity in both management and the ordinary members, creating an atmosphere of distrust, insecurity, unpreparedness, and confusion in terms of the proposals of this institutional participation model.

> Tourism is in a precarious situation in the state, as is the state in general, so we serve as a band-aid. It is one step forward and one step back. There are constant changes in state tourism managers and departments. There is little training in the tourism staff, so I have hardly participated, due to the scant importance given to it and the council (PS – 10).
>
> More commitment is needed, more action, everyone contributing, including our more powerful partners. It is essential to find a way in which action can be segmented and not disintegrated and continuously interrupted (ES - 08).

Collective negotiation, using a participatory context, is the best way to promote democracy and, in turn, mitigate serious social problems, leading to public debate in the search for solutions to common problems and open decisions. Citizens must feel part of both the process itself and the place they inhabit. However, the development of Conetur is aimed at restrictive participation and, even worse, limits political and economic groups, demonstrated by the distribution of representation, among other factors.

There is a structural participation problem and predominantly economic-monetary view, reflected in the parity relations between politicians and representatives of the economy, which is evident in the distribution of representation within the council, that is, 15 representatives of the private sector, 15 from the public sector and only 5 from social organizations (Table 1). However, participation must be open to citizens and not only to the services that are being offered,

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which may guarantee support for tourism development and effective public policies (Seki, 2013; Wan & Bramwell, 2015; Marzuki & Hay, 2013).

So, it appears that the relationship between the actors - addressed in the second dimension - reveals a low level of involvement and interrelation of the network, configuring by the disregard of the role that each actor plays, shaped by a historical process of an absence of a participation culture. Such actions end up reinforcing that the decision-making process is limited to a particular group, although it is an arena composed of the plurality of actors.

5. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION POSSIBILITIES IN POLICY DECISIONS

The different studies on councils have been critical because they only describe their functioning. However, in addition to reporting how they operate, this study uses a theoretical framework to explain the possible correlations, highlighting their shortcomings and offering several suggestions. Moreover, the survey contains a set of recommendations to improve performance.

The recommendations, which we call the scenario of possibilities, were divided into two topics to allow assessment of this council. These topics have a link between the activity operationalization and the councilors' suggestions, in light of the theory under discussion.

(a) Reinforcing democratic policies

It is essential to reinforce democratic policies by strengthening existing social participation spaces (institutionalization), but establishing a set of guidelines and actions that facilitate operationalization from the technical, political, and social standpoint, classified into the following elements:

- The selection processes should be based on professional competence → selecting teams based on the technical expertise of employees through civil service exams (Frey, 2007; Putnam, 2004);
- Decrease administrative bureaucracy based on clientelism and personalism → Restructuring actions and initiatives that raise some basic standards in the criteria of choosing the public manager as well as his technical team, thereby, avoiding superfluous appointments, and political personalism (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Pimentel et al., 2014);
- Representation should exhibit tripartite parity → 33.3% from the public sector, 33.3% from the private sector and 33.3% from the third sector, selected by nomination and voting (Schneider, 2005; Nóbrega, 2012);

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- In addition to decentralization, the aim is also to deconcentrate → Debating the issues, giving a voice to all of those involved that goes beyond its institutional format, making it possible to deconcentrate tourist activities. To implement deconcentration, all the players must participate in mobilizing and strengthening social structures and inter-institutional cooperation, thereby contributing to local development. Strengthening the dialogue and interaction between the administrative spheres involves moving from the federal to a local environment (Barquero, 2001; Arretche, 1996).
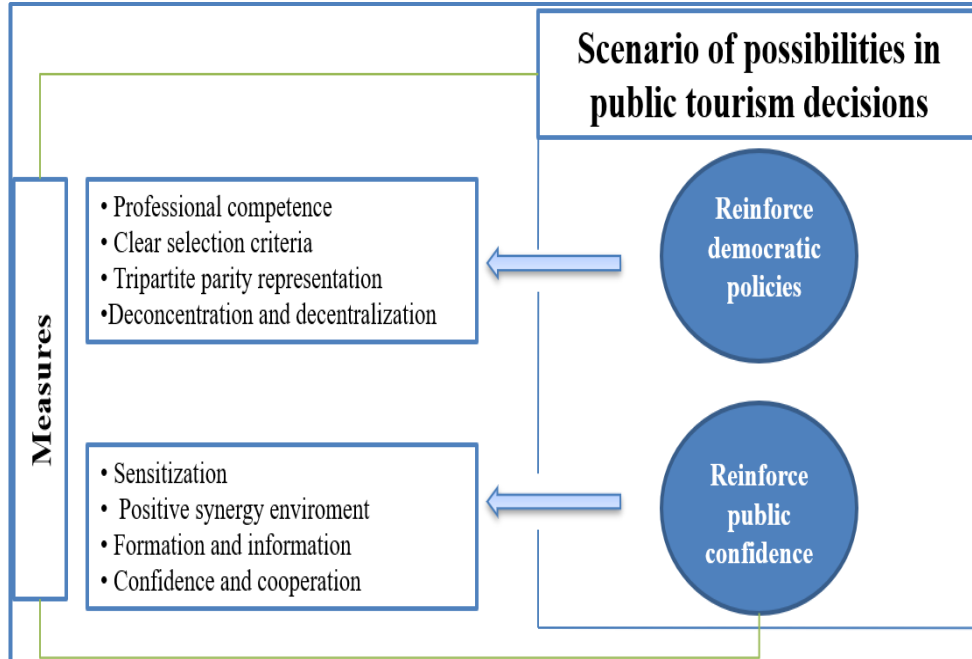
(b) Reinforcing public confidence

- Existing political processes provoke disbelief and distrust between the state and society. In this respect, it is necessary to create a favorable environment for a healthy relationship, capable of creating a participation culture. For achieving these results, a four-stage operationalization is suggested and described below:
- Sensitize → Workshops and lectures showing the importance of social participation and the role of each entity within that arena; creation of a state identity in order to sensitize and strengthen relations; and promote tourism as a social phenomenon, whose most significant resource is the people (Alió i Torres, 2005; Dodds & Butler, 2010; Marzuki & Hay, 2013).
- Recognize positive synergy → Foster cooperation and union, since the difficulty for one group can be the specialty of another, who could be cooperating mutually; create a favorable environment for all members to debate the issues, that is, encourage participation, primarily of the non-hegemonic sector; and support local companies, as a way of promoting the local economy (Barquero, 2001; Tang, 2017).
- Training and information → Knowledge of programs, projects, and actions in the tourism area, as well as other spheres, to establish guidelines and create synergies. The National Tourism Plan would be one of the main driving forces, which would make it possible to standardize the guidelines, and allow a macro perception of development instead of specific goals and objectives (Alió i Torres, 2005; Arretche, 1996);
- Strengthen the bonds of confidence and cooperation → Mechanisms to select professionals to occupy positions; broaden the possibilities of cooperation and exchange of experiences (Putnam, 2004).

As such, changes are necessary to these institutional structures beyond a purely market and economic view, which,

by equally represented actors, can collectively contribute with development proposals for their areas. Figure 2 illustrates the scenario of possibilities proposed for public tourism decisions.

Figure 1. Scenario of possibilities in public tourism decisions

Source: Research data.

Tourism requires economic, political, cultural, and primarily social changes compatible with the needs and concerns of all those involved. Thus, democratic policies and public confidence should be reinforced using a set of measures that restores a public management system supported by the residents and conducted collectively.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The entire participation process creates conflicts and has political value in the social context since everyone has a different viewpoint based on their experience and social position. Paradoxically, participation processes are created to reduce conflicts. In this respect, discussing how these policies are constituted is part of the framework for understanding how the participation of subjects within these participation arenas occurs, highlighting their shortcomings and offering solutions for future actions.

These spaces should be motivated to improve public administration systems that are currently discredited for being onerous. Since tourism is an arena within a democratic context of public policy, it may foster connections in the form of social capital, revealing a new relationship with the state and strengthening democracy.

True democratization means more than elections. The dignity of people requires them to be free (and able) to participate in the formation and planning of rules and the institutions that govern them. It is this model that was put forth in the regulatory framework. However, participation is shaped by a subjective field, requiring the interest, involvement, and engagement of all those who have the right, opportunity, and voice in the decision process, which involves a longer process of debates and relations in the search for consensus.

The difficulties of social participation in tourism policy decisions, with Conetur as a study case, are directly related to the history of tourism management in Brazil, which, since its inception in the 1970s, has been characterized by an authoritative vertical process, creating a political system that established the guidelines to occupy a segregated territory for selective and specific use. Thus, when participation became mandatory, two conflicting factors emerged: on the one hand, new mechanisms to remain in power and, on the other, distrust on the part of society. This policy framework was strategically conceived by the state to diminish society's power of intervention in public decisions, resulting in less engagement, and creating an unfavorable condition to local development.

As such, the challenges highlighted in the research (dependence, personalism, the role of councils and councilors and the culture of participation) can and should be mitigated using two solutions proposed in the study: reinforcing democratic policies and public confidence, via simple structural measures of significant economic and social impact, in line with the current scenario that is undergoing profound transformations.

Our objective in this study is to contribute to research on social participation in public decisions and the performance of management councils. Moreover, in addition to describing the harmful elements of this relation, it also indicates the route to efficient and effective public management that seeks to promote social well-being and can be replicated in these councils as the parameter of the path to follow.

[1] The discussion of advisory versus deliberative is transcended, given that several management councils have achieved positive results despite not being legally recognized. Indeed, whether the council is advisory or deliberative is one of the answers to the institutional format desired, that is, a set of forces that will determine the importance attributed to the sector/activity in question.

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