

Public Governance: Is this note true? A shift in the analysis of Decree No. 9.203/2017 based on the sociological reduction of Guerreiro Ramos

Governança Pública: é verdade esse bilhete? Um deslocamento na análise do Decreto n. 9.203/2017 a partir da redução sociológica de Guerreiro Ramos

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Abstract: This study approaches public governance considering Decree No. 9.203/2017 from an analysis of ethical-political valuation from the perspective of Guerreiro Ramos' sociological reduction (Boullosa et al, 2021; Filho; Eynaud, 2020; Ramos, (2024) [1954]; Serva, 2023). The sociological reduction covers four dimensions: the context of scientific production, ethical-political valuation, the balance between research methods and intervention to think about reality. The study proposes that public governance is ontologically closer to social management than to private bureaucratic management. Based on the proposal of an ethical-political valuation of public governance in Brazil, based on the thinking of Guerreiro Ramos, the study contributes to the following understandings: (i) the recent institutionalization of public governance policy merely instrumentalizes a discussion without public debate; (ii) considering that the logic of private bureaucracy distances itself from the adoption of substantive public governance, approximations are proposed with social management and Guerreiro Ramos' perception of the paraeconomy; and (iii) a decolonial-inspired shift in the public agenda is proposed, developing practices of learning and changing organizational culture for public governance. This vision seeks to put the collective interest at the forefront of the work of the Public Administration, especially with regard to the planning, execution, control and evaluation of public policies.

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Keywords: Public governance; Managerialism; Decree n. 9.203/2017; Social management; Sociological reduction.

Resumo: Este estudo aborda a governança pública considerando o Decreto n. 9.203/2017 a partir de uma análise de valorização ético-política sob a perspectiva da redução sociológica de Guerreiro Ramos (Boullosa et al, 2021; Filho; Eynaud, 2020; Ramos, (2024) [1954]; Serva, 2023). A redução sociológica abrange quatro dimensões: contexto da produção científica, valoração ético-política, equilíbrio entre métodos de pesquisa e intervenção para pensar a realidade. O estudo propõe que a governança pública se aproxima ontologicamente da gestão social e não da gestão burocrática privada. A partir da proposta de valoração ético-política da governança pública no Brasil baseada no pensamento de Guerreiro Ramos, o estudo contribui para as seguintes compreensões: (i) a recente institucionalização da política de governança pública apenas instrumentaliza uma discussão sem debate público; (ii) considerando que a lógica da burocracia privada distancia-se da adoção de uma governança pública substantiva, propõe-se aproximações com a gestão social e da percepção de para economia de Guerreiro Ramos; e (iii) propõe-se um deslocamento de inspiração decolonial da agenda pública, desenvolvendo práticas de aprendizagem e mudança da cultura organizacional para a governança pública. Essa visão busca colocar em primeiro plano o interesse coletivo na atuação da Administração Pública, notadamente no que diz respeito ao planejamento, execução, controle e avaliação das políticas públicas.

Palavras-chave: Governança pública; Gerencialismo; Decreto n. 9.203/2017; Gestão Social; Redução sociológica.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration reforms in Brazil, particularly since the 1990s, within the framework of New Public Management (NPM), have uncritically adopted foreign perspectives on public management, considerably impacting the way public policies are planned, executed, controlled and evaluated. Thought of as a public management model for "all seasons", NPM paved the way for managerialism in Brazil, along with a variety of management perspectives that turned more towards the logic of private bureaucracy than towards the environment of public administration. In the field of public administration, hegemony is marked by the agendas of international multilateral organizations, which reproduce the neoliberal rhetoric of state inefficiency. It is no coincidence that the public governance agenda in Brazil has been marked by the colonality of neoclassical management ontologies, epistemologies,

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methodologies and agendas within the field of public administration, a relevant environment for the propagation of power and coloniality in the state (Andion; Magalhães, 2021; Boullosa et al, 2021; Borges, 2000; Caldeira; Secchi, Firmino, 2023; Quijano, 2007; Mignolo, 2017). Thus, current debates on public management include discussions on the subject of public governance in Brazil, at municipal, state and federal level. Public governance has been perceived in the managerialist field as the "new answer" to the problems of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in public administration, but "is that true?"² The aim of this study is to analyze the insertion of the theme of public governance in Brazil and its recent institutionalization in Decree No. 9.203/2017, based on the proposal of sociological reduction of Guerreiro Ramos, who dedicated himself to thinking about the public machine and public policies from the Brazilian context and from a paraeconomic paradigm.

This study recognizes Guerreiro Ramos' approach as an inspiration for decolonial thinking, as it contributes to shifting the analysis to a place of criticism and rethinking, within the field of public affairs, the structures that shape the actions of public administration. The displacement of decoloniality has pointed the way towards the place of alterity, the non-homogenization and non-universalization of demands, aiming to serve the collective interest while respecting the country's differences and specificities, and challenging the hegemonic models of thought and practice in the field of public administration (Boullosa et al, 2021; Dagnino, 2011; Filho; Eynaud, 2020; Lima; Gussi, 2021).

Sociological reduction is aligned with the decolonial field as it is proposed as a method of analyzing social concepts and facts, designed to enable scholars to practice the transposition of knowledge and experiences from one perspective to another (Abdalla; Faria, 2017; Ramos, 2024 [1954]). By reduction, the author understands the idea of eliminating everything that is unnecessary, a purification. For Ramos (2024) [1954], sociological reduction

² "Is this note true?" is a social media meme that emerged from a phrase at the end of a note written in 2018 by a 5-year-old Brazilian child to his mother in an attempt to skip school the next day. After its publication on social media, the note took on huge proportions on the internet, and has even been used in advertising campaigns by large organizations. The meme consists of writing a fake message, ending with "it's true this billet". The use of the meme phrase is due to the critical analysis of the narrative of public governance in a neoliberal context.

can be described as a methodical attitude that obeys rules and purifies objects. It assumes that social reality is endowed with meaning. It postulates a notion of the world, in other words, it establishes that consciousness and objects are related.

The analysis of the theme of public governance was based on the sociological reduction of Ramos (2024) [1954], which follows four main dimensions: (i) Contextualization of scientific production; (ii) Ethical-political valuation of such production; (iii) Balance of qualitative and quantitative research techniques and methods; and (iv) Search for an intervention in reality in order to improve it. It is therefore a perspectivist approach, because it understands that the meaning given to an object is only possible within its context. Its supports are collective and not individualistic, in that a point of view is shaped by its environment. It establishes a critical-assimilative procedure of the foreign experience and is an attitude that shows the historical and social presuppositions of the objects, so although its supports are popular experiences, sociological reduction is an elaborate attitude of perceiving reality, including recognizing coloniality as limiting national possibilities (Ramos, 2024 [1954]; Santos, 2003).

This study focuses on two of the four dimensions of sociological reduction: (i) Contextualization of scientific production; (ii) Ethical-political valuation of such production. The aim is to contribute to an understanding of public governance that is closer to the substantive rationalities of the dynamics of social management, by shifting the public management agenda beyond the managerialist rhetoric of public affairs (Abdalla; Faria, 2017; Boullosa et al, 2021; Lima; Gussi, 2021; Ramos, 1989). This perception would be closer to the primacy of the collective interest within the scope of the Public Administration's actions when planning, executing, controlling and evaluating public policies.

2. THE POWER OF PRIVATE MANAGEMENT RHETORIC IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Public administration reforms in Brazil have been guided by international agendas and the dilemma of crises of governability or ungovernability, and offer

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diagnoses and suggestions for the problems encountered from the predominant viewpoint of the market (Diniz, 1998; Santos, 2003). Especially since the 1990s, with the adoption of the Washington Consensus measures, different dimensions that would be important for their implementation, such as socio-economic, political, organizational and even managerial demands, have been mediated only by the tripod of efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness in trade-offs with politics. Reforms are conducted in a non-dialogical way, even though exogenous and endogenous factors, including national interests, are relevant to the way the public agenda is conducted.

Borges (2000) points to a contradiction between the prevailing market mentality and the imperatives of solidarity in a society that is guided by a wide range of fundamental and social rights revised in the 1988 Citizen's Constitution. This assertion is based on the perception that the market mentality seeks to maximize utility curves, to the detriment of the primacy of the public and collective interest that should be assumed by the ethos of the public man. For the author, neoliberal rhetoric is permeated by contradictions, which are reproduced in the daily life of public organizations, since the self-interested conduct of politicians, bureaucrats and their support groups results in a series of undesirable effects, such as the capture of public policies by private interests, the provision of public services at socially inefficient levels and the manipulation of macroeconomic policy by populist public agendas, notably mixed with patrimonialism or neopatrimonialism, models that are still intertwined in the Brazilian reality (Faoro, 2021 [1958]; Motta, 1987; Santos, 2003; Schwartzman, 2015 [1975]).

However, instead of focusing on the ethics of public service, the public choice approach accepts the inevitability of self-interested behavior, based on the Smithian logic of the "invisible hand", it proposes the creation of a system of incentives and penalties that aligns the pursuit of individual interest with the maximum benefit of the community. Borges (2001) points out that, among the strands of neoconservative thinking, public choice theory has had a notable influence on government agendas. This approach uses the tools of neoclassical positivism to analyze the political process in a utilitarian way and carry out

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reforms in public administration. In this way, the political process and its "intrusion" into market transactions are seen as threats to individual freedom and economic progress, emphasizing the discourse of private managerial efficiency, which invariably conflicts with the political dimension of social life, especially in its democratic dimension. In contrast, Polanyi (2011) argues that, as the market mentality is a relatively recent phenomenon, arising from the social and cultural transformations associated with the advent of capitalism, contrary to what public choice suggests, self-interested maximizing behavior is not innate to human beings, but rather the result of a long process of socio-cultural potentiation.

It should be noted that the management models thought up in the North and reproduced in the global South present what Santos (2003) points to as a "technical unity" perspective, a tool typical of globalization. Milton Santos argues that although modern societies are marked by economic and social differences, an underlying technical unity prevails that connects all these societies. This technical unity refers to the technologies, production systems and technical knowledge that are present everywhere, regardless of the level of development. However, for the thinker, this perspective does not mean that there is cultural or economic homogeneity; on the contrary, he reflects that globalization, while spreading technical unity, has also led to diversity and inequality. While the same technical systems were applied in different places, their consequences and impacts varied, and vary, drastically. This discussion is relevant for thinking about the models of public administration that have been reproduced in the global south, without the necessary adaptation or sociological reduction, as Guerreiro Ramos proposed.

Decoloniality in the field of public administration has been questioning the use of these models of public administration, considering that the political, social, economic and cultural context of each country is not unique, and what works in one place may not be appropriate in another (Boullosa et al; 2021; Lima; Gussi, 2021; Ramos, 1989). The unreflective use of management models and "packages" in public administration invariably results in ineffective public policies that are disconnected from local realities, since they do not address the

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real problems faced by the population, making them ineffective and even counterproductive.

Models that don't take into account the inequalities that exist in a country can exacerbate these disparities, policies that work well in contexts of high economic development can widen the gaps between rich and poor in less developed countries, and may work for accountability reporting purposes, but don't take effect in the substantive ontology of public policy (Borges, 2000, 2001; Faoro, 2021 [1958]; Santos, 2003; Schwartzman, 2015 [1975]). Marginalized populations often have specific needs that can be neglected by foreign models, or thought of in a homogenous way, without the perspective of gender, race, class, generation and region. This results in these groups being excluded from public policy and civic participation.

Public administration is constantly absorbing the influence of managerialist technical unit models. At public events aimed at public managers, the participation of private companies presenting and negotiating management "packages" associated with information technology, whose adherence to the logic of the *res publica* is questionable. Particularly in the era of data science and machine learning, public administration needs to take a critical look at governance systems for collecting, systematizing and processing large public databases of collective interest. The development of learning systems and the generation of knowledge in public organizations have specific characteristics that ontologically differ from private bureaucracies in their practices and organizational ethos (Gherard; Strati, 2014). The targeting of data and analyses that may be carried out in order to plan public policies needs to observe the public interest in terms of the different variables that are used as a basis for analysis and those that are marginalized on the public agenda. Bureaucracy, in its Weberian complexion, tends to standardize products, processes, activities and practices; the greater the standardization, the "easier" the management; however, in the context of applied social sciences in the field of public policy, not everything can be standardized or manualized, as envisaged by the managerialist perspective, a neoclassical model, typical of top-down management practices (Ramos, 1989; Boullosa et al, 2021).

Lejano (2021) understands that politics, as a variable in public policies, transcends the formal models of rationality that move towards the logic of the collective field, where the results of policies emerge from the work and rework of relationships between political actors. Beyond rationality, he thinks of relationality in the field of public policy, complementing conventional political regimes, which are closer to the technopolitical character of public administration. Public policies should reflect the needs and values of local society, and the imposition of external models can undermine this autonomy (Quijano, 2007; Mignolo, 2017). Added to this, continued dependence on public administration models from the global north can create a relationship of dependency and perpetuate the idea that internal solutions are not viable. This can lead to gaps in the development of local capacities. In addition, citizens and civil society organizations can resist policies that they perceive as foreign or unrepresentative of their interests, which can result in protests, political instability and a lack of legitimacy for government institutions, and it has been noted, for example, that initiatives such as participatory budgeting lose popular legitimacy due to the adoption of solely bureaucratic processes for compliance purposes (Borges, 2000).

From another point of view, looking at recent international debates on private agency in the dynamics of public governance, Talesh (2022) observes, based on empirical studies, that more and more, the processes of regulating state action are coming from the market. The author explains that private organizations are now driving what constitutes the content and meaning of public legal rights, originally created by legislators, courts and regulatory agencies. What at first appears to be a bottom-up action and greater participation by society, in fact reveals a concern for the primacy of the democratic collective interest to the detriment of the private interest.

Decoloniality in Public Administration reflects on these aspects from a critical point of view, observing with epistemological filters the external models that have been building institutions incapable of thinking about the national interest, adapting to local changes or responding effectively to the needs of the population, affecting not only governance, but governability (Abdalla; Faria,

2017; Lejano, 2021). This criticism is not new; Guerreiro Ramos already pointed out in the early days of Brazilian developmentalism the problem of adopting foreign models without properly "reducing" them to suit national needs. Manoel and Braun Neto Andion (2023) argue that the current debate on governance is moving towards a reconceptualization of the field, with the aim of building bridges and possibilities that remain aligned with the democratic values of the public sector.

3. PUBLIC GOVERNANCE AS A "NEW" MODEL OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Corporate governance emerged as a school of management and as a response to complex and multifaceted changes in organizations, initially in the context of private organizations, to deal with agency conflict and externalities that cover their actions with internal and external audiences (Ansell; Torfing, 2016; Kettle, 2000; Peters; Pierre, 2015). According to Kreuzberg and Vicente (2019), the advance of research into corporate governance is partly attributed to the advent of the financial crises and corporate scandals of the 2000s and to questions about companies' practices. This approach represents an "evolution" of traditional concepts of administration and management, recognizing the need for a more holistic and adaptable model to deal with modern challenges. In the field of organizational studies, this model is still aligned with the neoclassical basis, considering it one of the phases of managerialism (Buta; Teixeira, 2020).

Other factors that fostered the development of corporate governance studies and practices were the processes of globalization which resulted in complex challenges and opportunities, companies needing to deal with global supply chains, international competition and cross-border regulatory issues (Aguilera; Florackis; Kim, 2016). The advance of information technology has fundamentally transformed the way organizations operate, requiring constant adaptation to new systems, processes and business models, which, however, do not break with neoliberal rhetoric. According to Al-Baidhani (2014), while these variables (processes and technology) have changed, society has also undergone significant changes, including a greater demand for environmental

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accountability, demands for transparency and social responsibility, and a diversification of stakeholder values and expectations.

Unlike the traditional focus on maximizing profits for shareholders, governance highlights, in theory, the importance of all stakeholders, including employees, local communities, customers and the environment. According to Jreisat (2012), corporate governance emphasizes transparency in organizational operations and accountability by leaders, including disclosure of financial information, business ethics and open communication with stakeholders in order to reduce information asymmetry. However, it should not be forgotten that this agenda arose especially after corporate scandals and the failures of large companies. According to Grindle (2017), corporate governance practices are designed to protect the interests of shareholders, promoting transparency and minimizing risks. Historically, the model was designed and controlled by international organizations in the global north, from a perspective of neoclassical technical unity.

In public organizations, governance emerged with the same rhetoric as corporate governance, as a response to the need for greater efficiency, transparency and accountability and the fight against corruption (Andion; Magalhães, 2021; Ansell; Torfing, 2022; Martins and Marini, 2010; Martins, 2011). Governments have sought to adopt "good" public governance practices to improve the delivery of public services and strengthen citizens' trust in government institutions and governability. However, as has been the case throughout public administration reforms, the prospect of public governance has not been accompanied by a change in organizational culture and internal processes, let alone the adaptation and adaptation of these practices to the complex context of the public interest.

In Brazil, the debate on public governance emerged in the mid-1990s, in the context of neoliberalism-inspired reform, but it only became a model in the 2000s. The first discussions arose comparing the dimensions of governability, governance and state reform (Diniz, 1996), without yet defining governance as a practice, but as an ontology. However, from then on, the discussions that followed distanced themselves from the ontological discussion and were

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inserted into the field of management, in the context of organizational development, very focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies, essentially in terms of control and monitoring (Boullosa et al, 2021; Martins, 2005); this is followed by studies on the development of governance chains, public value, the importance of the role of leadership and even public governance standardization models. There is also a considerable effort to think about public governance indicators and good governance and governmentality practices (Amos, 2010; Martins; 2011).

Manoel, Braun Neto and Andion (2023), when analysing studies on public governance in Brazil, systematized national production and identified different understandings of the term, namely compliance as a practice, state capacities for governance and governability, a new model of public management and a phenomenon. The authors identify the greatest volume of research on the emphasis on compliance and integrity, aligned with a corporate vision of governance in terms of good practices. The most critical discussions are on the state's capacity for action in relation to the dynamics of governability, cooperation and the generation of public value.

The discussions on public governance as a new model do not reach a consensus on whether or not it is a break with the NPM, although we can see that it has evolved by adding values and principles to management, as well as bringing a more horizontal and networked perspective to public management. With regard to public governance as a phenomenon, the authors point out the agenda of changes and reconfigurations that public governance encompasses, as well as its consequences for public policies. One factual change is the drafting and sanctioning of Decree No. 9.203 in 2017, which, in this paper, is discussed as part of the public governance management model implemented in Brazil.

In this sense, authors such as Andion and Magalhães (2021) and Caldeira, Secchi and Firmino (2023) articulate how the concept of "public governance" has been translated into Brazilian legislation, mistakenly treating it as synonymous with "corporate governance" and "good governance". Although there is no consensus among the authors on whether public governance is a

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new model or not, this study understands that, within the scope of Brazilian public management, public governance is epistemologically aligned with NPM, in its fourth adapted version, considering the previous ones to be pure managerialism, consumerism and Public service Oriented (Hood, 1995).

This paper therefore understands that in the empirical field of practices, public governance is still being appropriated by the NPM agenda, given that it adheres to corporate governance knowledge without sufficiently adapting it to the public ethos or even to a national governance perspective. In fact, public governance in Brazil has suffered from the interference of private governance and presents a series of challenges and critical implications. Private agency in the public sphere can lead to the state being captured by specific economic interests, to the detriment of public welfare, while, of course, maintaining an aura of compliance and transparency (Boullosa et al, 2021; Lima; Gussi, 2021). This scenario has, instead of improving, the potential to aggravate inequality and social exclusion, since policies tend to favor private interests over the public interest, disregarding important actors in the formation of the public agenda and even in its implementation (Andion; Magalhães, 2021).

Special attention is paid to decision-making processes, many of which are made outside of public scrutiny, hindering substantive transparency and not just formal transparency, since citizens do not have access to information about who is influencing policies and in what way. Public governance only in its formal instrumentality does not achieve the public interest when important decisions are made outside of democratic mechanisms, leading to a loss of confidence in democratic institutions and civic participation. It can be seen that the private managerial rhetoric absorbed into the Public Administration, under this new language, serves an interference that often talks about the uncontrolled privatization of essential public services, such as health, education and infrastructure, which can result in higher costs for citizens, poor quality of services and lack of access for the poorest, without forgetting that it often prioritizes profit over public welfare. This can lead to the detour of resources and investments that should be earmarked for social development, instead of serving the profit interests of companies.

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As Boullosa et al (2021) and Caldeira, Secchi and Firmino (2022) point out, there is an invariable technical simplification of corporate governance in public administration, of public problems, based on standardized single solutions for all problems. Borges (2000; 2001) and Lima and Gussi (2021) observe that, in this process of absorbing corporate rhetoric into the public environment without adapting it, the complexity of the challenges faced, such as changing the organizational culture and organizational learning processes in public administration, is disregarded - as if the most important thing is to have the booklet and the manual. This process ignores the fact that the success or failure of governance is intrinsically linked to the specific context in which it is inserted, or even, as Lejano (2021) points out, to the relationships that are established in politics, beyond Weberian rationality. Ramos (2024 [1954]) already warned us that what works in one place may not work in another due to cultural, political and socio-economic differences.

There is an exaggerated belief that good corporate governance practices per se can transform an organization or society for the better. This can lead to an obsessive search for "best practices" without considering the nuances and limitations of the environment in which they are applied. Public governance, ontologically, brings us an important perspective of networking, horizontality and the participation of the actors involved, but how do such practices take shape in a context of broader structural problems in a country like Brazil, affected by complex structures of coloniality and historical social inequality? Ignoring these limitations can lead to superficial and ineffective solutions (Faoro, 2021 [1958]; Schwartzman, 2015 [1975]). There is a detachment from real needs, which can result in policies and practices that are disconnected from the real needs of society. Decisions are made based on abstract theories and models, rather than a deep understanding of local issues, and the accountability report is enough to affirm that public governance is being carried out. It can also be seen that politicians and leaders, regardless of their political leanings, can be attracted to the fetish of governance because it seems to offer a quick and easy solution to complex problems. This can lead to simplistic political speeches and empty promises.

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The study by Buta and Teixeira (2020) shows that the understanding of public governance has been limited to its formal nature and its measurement, since studies have focused on the manualization of practices, especially within the scope of internal and external control bodies, the quality of regulation, the creation and validation of public governance indicators, e-government, efficiency and capacity measures, levels of transparency and corruption.

Starting from a decolonial inspiration, public administration is currently permeated by the "fetish" of private corporate governance, a term we describe as a tendency to attribute to (corporate) governance an almost magical power to solve all socio-economic problems. This idea arises from the overly optimistic belief that good governance practices alone can transform a society or an organization, regardless of wider circumstances and contexts. However, this view often ignores the complexities of reality and the real challenges that governance faces. It should be noted that this study focuses on a critique of governance, not in terms of its ontology, but in terms of its failure to adapt to the public ethos.

In this sense, it can be seen that studies on public governance start by thinking about the role of public governance within the Public Administration and its relationship with governability and the public interest. However, in the daily life of the PCA, this discussion is moving towards more technical and instrumental discussions on the subject, in the field of compliance and integrity, as can be seen in the analysis of Decree No. 9.203, of November 22, which provides for the governance policy of the direct, autonomous and foundational federal public administration.

4. THE DECOLONIAL SHIFT PUBLIC GOVERNANCE BASED ON SOCIOLOGICAL REDUCTION

Decoloniality in the field of knowledge has its roots in critical theories and movements that question the structures of power, knowledge and domination that emerged during the colonial period and has broadened discussions in all areas of knowledge, notably in the applied social sciences and in Administration as a field of knowledge (Abdalla; Faria, 2017; Boullosa et al, 2021). Although it

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is an apparently contemporary theme, the critical studies that result in decoloniality date back to the middle of the last century. Thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, the post-colonial theories of thinkers who criticize the Eurocentric narratives of history and culture, such as Homi Bhabha, have played a fundamental role in questioning colonial structures and in the search for a new world order, highlighting how Western knowledge has been used to justify colonization and how colonized cultures have been distorted.

In the 1980s, the subaltern and subalternity studies of Gayatri Spivak and Ranajit Guha in India argued that the voices of the subaltern classes were silenced in colonial and post-colonial history. In Latin America, from the 1990s onwards, the studies of Anibal Quijano were crucial in the development of the theory of modernity/coloniality, not just a historical event, but a global system of power that still influences social, political and cultural structures. Other thinkers such as Walter D Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, Arturo Escobar, Maria Lugones and others have expanded on Quijano's ideas and proposed decolonial thinking as a critical approach to challenging and dismantling the power and knowledge structures of the global north. In Brazil, decolonial discussions, even if they didn't bear this name, have been underway for more than half a century. Guerreiros Ramos, Lilia Gonzalez, Paulo Freire and Milton Santos are examples of thinkers who have already proposed other matrices and paradigms of thought.

In science, the decolonial perspective is an interdisciplinary practice, which is why we are using it to analyze public governance as a process, a practice, a norm, with the aim of decolonizing not only academic knowledge, but also social institutions and practices. Decolonial thinking allows us to think ontologically about public governance, in essence, allowing us to: question Western and Global North ideas and values as universal and superior, recognize the existence of multiple knowledges and ways of knowing, valuing local contexts, involving an ethical and political commitment to social justice, equality and the emancipation of historically marginalized groups. We are therefore starting from the studies of Guerreiros Ramos, specifically sociological reduction, as an essay for thinking about public governance.

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It should be noted that Guerreiro Ramos focused on studies of substantive rationality in management, particularly in public management, considering that purely instrumental bureaucratic management cannot achieve the collective interest, line with Polanyi (2011) and as Borges (2000) later reflected. These studies provide the basis for social management in Brazil. Social management is an approach that seeks to promote the active participation of citizens and civil society organizations in the management of public policies and the resolution of social problems, emphasizing the importance of a broader and more integrated vision of social development, prioritizing collective well-being and the inclusion of the most vulnerable sections of society (Dagnino, 2011; Lejano, 2021; Fran a Filho; Eynaud, 2020; Lima; Gussi, 2021).

Ramos (2024) [1954] starts from the premise that there is a Brazilian perspective to sociology, and recognizes the emergence of a critical awareness of the national reality from the first decades of the 20th century. Some Brazilian thinkers began to develop their own critical consciousness beyond the colonial reflexes, motivated by the emergence of a certain infrastructure (industrialization, urbanization and changes in consumer habits) that promoted, in its own way, a collective self-consciousness. Critical consciousness, in turn, is the ability of a people to reflect on their determinants (p. 61), which is what distinguishes the person from the thing, it is, in the author's words, "the struggle for possession of one's own destiny" (p. 62), which implies a self-determination that does not exclude dialogue with what the author calls universal consciousness. In other words, critical consciousness places the collective author in a position that is not to be confused with nationalism, which excludes the universal. For the author, the more a population assimilates consumption habits in a critical way, the more its political consciousness grows and the greater its pressure becomes to obtain resources that ensure higher levels of existence (Ramos, 2024, [1954]).

In this field of discussion about a critical national conscience and in parallel to the theoretical-empirical debate on public governance, in 2017, Brazil published Decree No. 9.203, of November 22, which provides for the

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governance policy of the direct, autarchic and foundational federal public administration. Initially, it should be noted that the legal figure of the decree, as a normative, divides opinions, given the memory of the authoritarian paradigm by the federal public administration established by Decree-Law 200 of 1967, the first attempt to implement managerialism in Brazil (Bresser-Pereira, 2010). It is certainly possible to criticize the decree as a normative figure in a democratic rule of law. Decrees can be seen as dangerous authoritarian tools, unilateral, when there is no proper balance of powers and democratic control over the Executive, however, the biggest criticism that can be leveled at the decree, as a legal act, is the lack of democratic debate, without the scrutiny of the other powers and even of civil society, which means that there is no public debate or representation of citizens, which also highlights the authoritarian legacies of the formation of the Brazilian state (Borges, 2000; Faoro, 2021 [1958]; Schwartzman, 2015 [1975]).

This perspective can lead to decisions that do not reflect the interests and needs of the population, or even, in the case of public governance, the theoretical and empirical view of experts on the subject. The Executive's ability to issue decrees, especially in specific political contexts, can lead to an excessive concentration of power in the hands of a few, weakening the principle of separation of powers that is fundamental to a democratic republic. The decree, therefore, is not valid as a democratic act in a discussion about public governance, since it ontologically requires the participation of the actors - after all, who is this governance for?

Guerreiro Ramos' sociological reduction proposes a national sociological method. It is an exercise in thinking about Brazilian sociological reflection as a condition of the development structures in which Brazil found itself at the time the work was written. It should be noted that, in this study, we understand sociological reduction as an epistemology and not as a method. For Ramos (2024 [1954]), sociological reduction is a way of thinking about social concepts and facts, designed to enable the scholar to practice "the transposition of knowledge and experiences from one perspective to another". (p.54). By reduction, the author understands the idea of eliminating everything that is

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unnecessary, a purification, development comprises "the promotion by which regions and nations pass from one structure to another higher one" (p. 149), such higher structures are those capable of freeing labor from the primary sector and transferring it to the secondary sector.

For Ramos (2024 [1954]), sociological reduction can be described as a methodical attitude that obeys rules and purifies objects. It assumes that social reality is endowed with meaning. It postulates a notion of the world, in other words, it establishes that consciousness and object are related. It is perspectivist, because it understands that the meaning given to an object is only possible within its context. Its supports are collective and not individualistic, in that a point of view is limited by its context. It establishes a critical-assimilative procedure of foreign experience and is an attitude that shows the historical and social presuppositions of objects, so although its supports are popular experiences, sociological reduction is an elaborate attitude of perceiving reality. One of the author's important reflections is on the idea of development itself. For Ramos (2024 [1954]), the assessment of development must follow criteria that go beyond economic calculation, so development is related to economic aspects, but it is also related to improvements in the living conditions of individuals. Ramos (1996) establishes some laws to be observed when adopting the sociological reduction method:

a) Law of commitment: in peripheral countries, the idea and practice of sociological reduction can only occur to a social scientist who has systematically adopted a position of engagement or conscious commitment to their context. Sociological reduction, therefore, only occurs when the scholar from a peripheral country is consciously engaged with their context, i.e. there is no science immune to conditioning, understanding the world view as a view of a time and a nation (Ramos, 2024 [1954]);

b) Law of the subsidiary nature of foreign scientific production: all foreign scientific production is, in principle, subsidiary. Thus, a theory, a concept and a technique are created to fulfill an intentional purpose, since "when we use an object or product, without reducing it, we are involved by the intentionality it carries" (Ramos, 2024 [1954], p. 122). It is therefore society itself that must

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impose its objects on sociologists, and foreign theoretical production must be conditioned to the particular facts of this society.

c) Law of the universality of the general statements of science: the universality of science is only admitted in the domain of general statements, so universality is only recognized in the domain of general statements. For the author, scientists are part of a network of exchanges, which is universal, and occupy the same semantic field with a widely accepted and shared repertoire of statements. Apart from this, sociology is national in that its sociologists are motivated by a new, non-colonial social condition to which they are called upon to respond. This national sociology, however, is not reduced to applied sociology; and

d) Law of phases: in the light of sociological reduction, the reason for the problems of a particular society is always given by the phase in which that society finds itself. The phase a society is in interferes with the possibilities of sociological reduction. Ramos (2024 [1954], p. 142) reflects that the "total social phenomenon" depends on thinking in terms of phases, it is based on the category of totality, so the phase is a social-historical totality whose parts are dialectically related.

In this way, using Guerreiro Ramos' post-colonial (or decolonial) approach means that the priority schemes of theories thought up in the North and in the European context do not induce the peripheral Brazilian reality in its entirety, hence the need to think about a critical assimilation of knowledge about public governance in Brazil. In this study, this reduction seeks to assimilate only what is advantageous and appropriate for analyzing the phenomenon. Thus, the sociological reduction of thought on public governance in Brazil has been selected, followed by reflection, and finally applied to an ontological proposal public governance aligned with social management. For Ramos (2024 [1954]), this process follows four main stages: (i) Contextualization of scientific production; (ii) Ethical-political evaluation of such production; (iii) Balance of techniques and methods of qualitative and quantitative research; and (iv) Search for an intervention in reality in order to improve it.

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This process of reduction is a clear challenge for the researcher, who is not daring here to achieve perfection in the process of sociological reduction of knowledge about governance, but, above all, to think about these approaches in a substantive way in the Brazilian context. This step was taken in the analysis of scientific production in the context and state of society in which it was produced, in the contextualization of scientific production, in relation to the laws of commitment and phases, and was carried out considering the paradox of neoliberal rhetoric when dealing with the management of public affairs. Thus, the traits that can be used in the subaltern context are recognized, selecting only what is consistent with the reality of the context. In this sense, at this initial stage the scholar must recognize, as far as possible, the subjective and objective conditions of the context in which the knowledge was produced, covering socio-economic, cultural and historical conditions, among others.

The second stage, the ethical-political evaluation of scientific production, is related to the search for the conceptual assumptions that fostered the reflections made by the scholars. In this sense, for Ramos (2024 [1954]), notions of what the world is and perspectives influence scientific production. This analysis follows the law of the universality of general scientific statements and the law of the subsidiary nature of foreign scientific production, since, based on this observation, only what is of general scientific content and what is appropriate to the context analyzed should be considered relevant. The third stage, a balance of qualitative and quantitative research techniques and methods. Considering that this essay initially focuses on a bibliographical and documentary analysis. However, the importance of analyzing the phenomenon is better assimilated from different forms of observation, so the search for different types of methods, of a qualitative and quantitative nature, allows a closer understanding of the reality of the phenomenon, considering that social research is always an approximation. Finally, the fourth stage, which seeks to intervene in reality in order to improve it, is the culmination of the sociological reduction that allows the application of scientific knowledge that has been refined and adapted to the context, especially the subaltern and peripheral post-colonial context.

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This essay focuses on the analysis of Decree n. 9.203/2017 in the dimensions of (i) Contextualization of scientific production and (ii) Ethical-political valuation of such production of sociological reduction in Guerreiros Ramos. Considering these dimensions, we analyzed some points that are presented in the text of the legal provision of Decree No. 9.203/2017, which establishes the public governance policy in the country. The text sanctioned and published in the Federal Official Gazette has 21 articles, which have already undergone more than seven changes, including repeals and additions.

As for the structure of the text, it retains the neutrality and formality typical of official documents and government decrees. From a conceptual point of view, the regulation contains definitions of "public governance", "public value", "senior management" and "risk management", but stops at a technical-instrumental conceptualization of these capabilities. It also presents a list of public governance principles and guidelines, such as responsiveness, integrity, reliability, among others, indicating alignment with the literature produced abroad, within the framework of the managerialist conception of Public Administration.

The decree highlights the responsibility of senior management in implementing and maintaining governance mechanisms. This suggests an emphasis on the importance of the leadership's commitment to guaranteeing the effectiveness of governance. It creates decision-making spaces, committees, which, however, are invited to participate at the discretion of senior management. In fact, the creation of the Interministerial Governance Committee is one of the central points of the decree. Its function is to advise the President of the Republic on conducting governance policy, which demonstrates an attempt to centralize and coordinate governance efforts at the federal level. Another concern is with mechanisms such as leadership, strategy and control, as well as the implementation of internal controls and risk management, in line with the NPM's perspective of efficiency and transparency in public management.

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The updates made by Decree No. 9,901 of 2019 move in the same direction, merely adjusting details of the governance policy in the direction of compliance, but without instituting horizontal processes and mechanisms for social participation, or at the very least, organizational learning and changing the organizational culture for public governance. The decree maintains the managerialist belief and a certain fetish, or seduction, in the sufficiency of integrity manuals to make a public policy effective. Decision-making processes remain top-down and influence the country's entire governance culture, including at state and municipal levels, in other words, pro-forma public governance, only in instrumentality, and not in substance.

In this sense, when analyzing public governance as a management paradigm in public administration, its ethical-political alignment should be in line with social management, and not with private bureaucracy. In the field of knowledge of Administration, among the existing and practiced management models, social management is the one that most closely aligns with the perspective and ethos of the public interest, since it values greater direct participation by citizens in decisions that affect their lives, valuing the collective construction of solutions to social problems and integration between the state and civil society. It also recognizes the importance of civil society organizations and social movements in the formulation and implementation of policies, promoting partnerships between the state, social organizations and communities to strengthen actions and social relations between the various actors (Dagnino, 2011; Fran a Filho and Eynaud, 2020; Serva, 2023).

The social management perspective prioritizes preventive actions to avoid social problems before they become crises, and is based on human rights principles to guarantee equal opportunities and respect for diversity. As for the governance aspect, social management seeks to reduce social inequalities and promote the inclusion of marginalized groups, while advocating transparency in government actions and in the management of public resources, with accountability to society for the policies implemented and their results, not just from the point of view of compliance, but from the point of view of public value.

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The social management perspective in the field of public governance favors public policy councils as spaces for citizen participation in formulating and monitoring policies, processes in which citizens decide how part of the public budget will be used in their communities. In addition, social management is more committed to the formation and processes of collective learning as part of the organizational culture, a necessary vision for the culture of public governance. Shifting the discussion from public governance to social management is a necessary action in order to achieve substantive public governance.

Public administration can benefit from moving closer to social management than to private bureaucratic management in many ways. Guerreiro Ramos, in his 1981 work, "The New Science of Organizations: A Reconceptualization of the Wealth of Nations", proposes a paraeconomic paradigm in which social and economic results are emphasized, and not one to the detriment of the other, prioritizing social results and the well-being of the community, while private bureaucratic management is often more focused on profits and financial efficiency. The paraeconomic paradigm proposed by Guerreiro Ramos converges with the proposal of social management and revives the importance of the debate on rationality in organizational studies. The multicentric society envisioned by Ramos (1989) envisages a model oriented towards the community or towards individualism, an organizational delimitation in which the market is a legitimate and necessary social enclave, albeit limited and regulated.

The model proposes a systematic way of overcoming the one-dimensional paradigm of individual and collective life, allowing for a varied spectrum of alternatives. Its studies on substantive rationality lead to an agenda practiced in social management that is more aligned with the demands and needs of the population, ensuring that public services meet expectations and contribute to citizens' quality of life. This model promotes the active participation of citizens in public decisions, encouraging participatory democracy and the co-creation of policies. Unlike bureaucratic rigidity, social management allows for greater flexibility and the ability to adapt to social

changes and emerging demands. As well as fostering a long-term vision in public administration, moving closer to the perspectives of social management would enable the real development of the sustainable development agenda, seeking to balance current and future needs, preserving natural resources and promoting intergenerational responsibility.

Social management adopts more strategic and integrated planning, considering not only the immediate aspects but also the long-term consequences of public policies, and is therefore more in line with public governance and public value. Substantive public governance would be closer to its social function, as it would be logically interrelated with collective action and the primacy of the public interest, based on values and not just on private corporate governance pillars.

5. EMERGING CONSIDERATIONS

This essay seeks to lay the foundations for a critique of the models of public governance that have been reproduced and therefore initially asks whether this model of public governance, which has already been widely disseminated and manualized, is in fact real, in essence, substantive in its practices, or a fetish, an opaque attempt to implement public governance. This discussion starts from a questioning of neoliberal rhetoric and how it influences self-interested thinking that is not in line with the collective interest in the management of the *res publica* and moves towards decolonial thinking that criticizes the universalism imposed by the global North under the rhetoric of technical unity.

Based on the analysis proposed by Guerreiro Ramos, it is mainly possible to see that the current models of public governance are closer to the models of neoclassical private bureaucracy when they should be closer to the perspective of social management. Public administration reforms in Brazil, driven by the New Public Management paradigm since the 1990s, have unquestioningly adopted foreign perspectives on public management. This movement has had a profound impact on the way public policies are planned, executed, controlled and evaluated. By positioning itself as a "universal"

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management model, the NPM paved the way for managerialism in Brazil, bringing with it a variety of managerial approaches more in line with the logic of private bureaucracy than with the environment of Public Administration proper. The hegemony of the agendas of international multilateral organizations in the field of public policy demonstrates the strong influence of neoliberal rhetoric, which preaches the inefficiency of the state. Thus, the public governance agenda in Brazil has been shaped by a "coloniality" of neoliberal ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies and agendas within the field of public policy, for compliance purposes only.

Based on the proposal for an ethical-political valuation of public governance in Brazil based on the thinking of Guerreiro Ramos, this study contributes to the following understandings: (i) the recent institutionalization of the public governance policy by Decree no. 9. 203/2017 only instrumentalizes a discussion that is essential to the development of public policies in Brazil.203/2017, only instrumentalizes a discussion that is essential for the development of public policies in Brazil, without ontological discussions or public debate on the subject; (ii) the very logic of private bureaucracy distances itself from the real adoption of public governance, and for this reason, the study proposes the approximation of public governance with social and dialogical management; and (iii) a decolonial shift of the public management agenda is proposed, going beyond the neoliberal rhetoric of public administration, developing learning practices and changing the organizational culture for public governance. The approach to social management is a reflective proposal on the ethos that should guide public governance in Brazil, a proposal based on the reflections of Guerreiro Ramos in his studies on substantive organizations (Ramos, 1989). Therefore, in this essay, social management appears as a proposition, and its relations are due to its more substantive orientation of the public agenda and Public Administration.

This vision seeks to put the collective interest at the forefront of public administration, especially with regard to the planning, execution, control and evaluation of public policies. This approach not only recognizes the limitations imposed by coloniality, but also seeks to overcome the hegemonic models of

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thought and practice in the field of public policy, towards a more inclusive management that is sensitive to the country's diversities, only in this way will the message of governance be real.

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