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Digital Democracy and Gestão Social: Lessons from the Irish Convention on the Constitution

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Tese apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Desenvolvimento Regional da Universidade Federal do Tocantins como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de doutor em Desenvolvimento Regional. Orientador: Dr. Airton Cardoso Cançado

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Every man is sociable until a cow invades his garden

Irish Proverb

RESUMO

A **Gestão Social** é um conceito brasileiro que enfatiza a tomada de decisão coletiva e o engajamento público, contrasta com as abordagens tradicionais de gestão estratégica. Busca democratizar a administração pública por meio do diálogo, da inclusão e da transparência. Este estudo explora a integração da **Gestão Social** e das Tecnologias da Informação e Comunicação (TICs) no fortalecimento da participação democrática, usando a Convenção Constitucional da Irlanda como estudo de caso e analisando como as TICs, como as plataformas de mídia social, podem fortalecer a governança participativa ao envolver um espectro mais amplo da sociedade nos processos de tomada de decisão. Esta pesquisa utiliza uma metodologia qualitativa, com análise de conteúdo, para avaliar a Convenção Irlandesa em relação à participação cidadã. Os resultados revelam que, embora a Convenção tenha promovido com sucesso a transparência e a inclusão, enfrentou desafios ao equilibrar o poder entre os cidadãos e os políticos. A análise destaca que as ferramentas digitais podem aprimorar a democracia participativa ao fomentar a deliberação e empoderar os cidadãos, mas alerta contra a dependência excessiva da tecnologia devido aos riscos de exclusão e manipulação. Ao comparar a experiência irlandesa com outras inovações democráticas globais, esta pesquisa argumenta que a **Gestão Social** pode ser adaptada à era digital, oferecendo um quadro para uma governança mais inclusiva e transparente. A pesquisa contribui para a compreensão de como a democracia digital pode apoiar a **Gestão Social** no Brasil e além, fornecendo insights sobre como melhorar os processos democráticos por meio das TICs.

Palavras-chave: Gestão Social, TICs, democracia digital, participação cidadã, Convenção Constitucional da Irlanda.

ABSTRACT

Gestão Social is a Brazilian concept emphasizing collective decision-making and public engagement, contrasts with traditional strategic management approaches. It seeks to democratize public administration through dialogue, inclusion, and transparency. This study explores the integration of *Gestão Social* (Social Management) and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in enhancing democratic participation, using the Irish Convention on the Constitution as a case study and analyzes how ICTs, such as social media platforms, can strengthen participatory governance by involving a broader spectrum of society in decision-making processes. This research uses a qualitative methodology using content analysis to assess the Irish Convention's regarding citizen participation. The findings reveal that while the Convention successfully promoted transparency and inclusiveness, it faced challenges in balancing power between citizens and politicians. The analysis highlights that digital tools can enhance participatory democracy by fostering deliberation and empowering citizens but cautions against over-reliance on technology due to risks of exclusion and manipulation. By comparing the Irish experience with other global democratic innovations, this research argues that *Gestão Social* can be adapted to the digital age, offering a framework for more inclusive and transparent governance. The research contributes to the understanding of how digital democracy can support *Gestão Social* in Brazil and beyond, providing insights into improving democratic processes through ICTs.

Keywords: *Gestão Social*, ICTs, digital democracy, citizen participation, Irish Convention on the Constitution.

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LIST OF ABREVIATTIONS AND ACRONYMS

AI – Artificial Intelligence

ICTs – Information and Communication Technologies

IDB – Inter-American Development Bank

I.R.A. - Irish Republican Army

LLMS – Large Language Models

NLP – Natural Language Processing

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

UN – United Nations

U.K. – United Kingdom

VPNs – Virtual Private Networks

SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION[12]

This doctoral thesis is situated within the concept of *Gestão Social*, which is a scientific discipline that seeks a new approach to public administration, contrasting with strategic management (TENÓRIO, 1998). Therefore, this concept aims to invert the logic from State-Society and Capital-Labor to Society-State and Labor-Capital, seeking to ensure that the interests of the people prevail and thus making a fairer democracy possible. Moreover, from a Brazilian perspective, *Gestão Social*, particularly according to the definition provided by Cançado *et al*. (2015a), is an original concept that, as noted by Rivera and Cançado (2017), proposes a break from classical administration. It is also a product of Brazilian colonial relations and the contemporary history of the 20th century.

Further on, within this thesis the term *Gestão Social* is used in Portuguese instead of an English equivalent for, as mentioned on the previous paragraph, it can be said that it is an original Brazilian concept. The works of Marinho *et al.* (2024) and Hernández (2016, 2017) also reinforce this idea for they researched the terms Social Management, Social Administration, *gestión social* and *gerencia social* and concluded that no equivalent could be found published in English or Spanish. These works are further explained in the Theoretical framework chapter.

In liberal democracies, government is carried out through politics that recognize the freedoms and limits of citizens in the field of social action. Thus, public policies are a set of bidimensional governmental actions that seek to achieve public interest goals in a manner that ensures social acceptance and expected results (AGUILAR, 2012). Furthermore, according to Parada (2007), democracy must enable people to present themselves publicly to ensure that society can engage in self-reflection and debate; This discussion fosters transformation and represents the true wealth of a given society. A good public policy originates from courses of action and information determined by the participation of the private sector and the community in a democratic manner (PARADA, 2007).

For democracy to be genuine, participation and debate are essential. New technologies can democratize the public sphere by allowing citizens to deliberate among

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[2] This thesis will be translated and published also in Portuguese after its conclusion.

themselves and with the government. Digital democracy—the use of Information and Communications Technologies for participation and public decision-making processes—can engage new groups of people, empower citizens, and establish new relationships between society and governments. New technologies can enhance the representativeness of democracy by increasing citizen participation and improving its legitimacy by enabling such freedoms (SIMON, 2017). The last decade has pushed society toward a new direction regarding democracy and deliberation. Some countries, such as Iceland and Ireland, have attempted to change their constitutions through democratic deliberation by utilizing information and communication technologies (GHERGHINA, 2014).

In my dissertation (MARINHO, 2019), I analyzed the case of Iceland through the perspective of *Gestão Social* to identify whether the methodology used in the process and how it was conducted could be integrated into this concept of study. The global financial crisis of 2008 led to the collapse of the Icelandic financial system, which was unexpected given the previously low levels of corruption reported in international surveys. Some analysts argue that the collapse was driven by clientelism and nepotism among politicians, financial institution owners, and large corporations (VAIMAN; DAVIDESON; SIGURJONSSON, 2010; VAIMAN; SIGURJONSSON; DAVIDSSON, 2011; MIXA; VAIMAN, 2015).

Following these events, the Supreme Court reappointed the elected members of the former Constitutional Assembly, which had been composed after the National Forum, to form a new 'Constitutional Council' (FREEMAN, 2013; BERGSSON; BLOKKER, 2013; ODDSDÓTTIR, 2014; FILLMORE-PATRICK, 2013; LANDEMORE, 2015). Parliament and existing political figures were excluded from participation. Instead, a group of 25 members—15 men and 10 women, representing diverse backgrounds—was tasked with drafting the new constitution. The process took place in Reykjavik from April 6 to July 29, 2011, and the council was organized into three groups (ODDSDÓTTIR, 2014; FILLMORE-PATRICK, 2013). As Valtysson (2014) details:

> The Constitutional Council was formed on 6 April 2011 and divided itself into three working groups. *Group A* worked on basic values, citizenship and national language, the structure of the Constitution, natural resources, environmental issues, human rights, and the state church. *Group B* worked on the foundation of the Icelandic Constitution; the roles, positions, and responsibilities of the President, Parliament, government, and ministers; the responsibilities of the executive; and the status of municipalities. Finally, *Group C* worked on public democratic participation, the independence of judicial courts, the supervision of judicial courts regarding other holders of

state authority, parliamentary elections, the constituency system and MPs, international contracts, and foreign affairs (p.55).[3]

Given the four-month timeframe and the need for transparency to enhance credibility, especially to ensure the assembly's legitimacy in the eyes of the government, the Council chose to utilize online and social media technologies. By 2009, 94% of the Icelandic population had internet access (FILLMORE-PATRICK, 2013). Although there were initial concerns about the potential for uncivil debates on social media, the discussions were conducted in a profound and open manner (ODDSDÓTTIR, 2014). Citizens could comment on the Council's website and participate in discussions on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr. Additionally, videos of interviews, meetings, and each new draft were streamed or posted on YouTube. People also had the option to provide feedback through hard-copy letters (ODDSDÓTTIR, 2014; FREEMAN, 2013).

In 2012, the draft was submitted to a referendum, with approximately 50% of voters participating. About two-thirds of those who voted approved of the new constitution. However, despite this approval, the *Althingi* ultimately "shelved" the process (ODDSDÓTTIR, 2014; FILLMORE-PATRICK, 2013; FREEMAN, 2013). Chart 01 presents a summary of the results of my dissertation, Marinho (2019), in light of the previous discussion on this topic.

Chart 01 - Crowdsourced constitution process vs. *Gestão Social*

Analyzed categories	*Gestão Social*	Iceland's crowdsourced constitution process	Were the requirements met according to *Gestão Social*?
Participation	'Process dialogically coordinated that has as protagonists are all social actors identified in the territory' (TENÓRIO, 2016b, p.62).	The topics were open to discussion, but the writing process was in the hands of the 25 Council members.	Yes, however, partially since only the 25 members had decision-making power.
Transparency	'Necessary condition for the other characteristics, since the decision-making process goes through the understanding, for language using and communication between people the information must be available to all[..]' (CANÇADO *et al.,* 2022, p.130)	The process was largely posted online in order to promote transparency and accountability, except for the actual writing process.	Yes, except for the writing process itself
Pluralism and Inclusiveness	Pluralism concerns the representation of diverse actors that participate on the decision-making processes on the local public policies and Inclusiveness considers the communication power of society as a	There was a 40% requirement for women members in the council ensuring their representativeness, however there was no such requirement for different social	Yes, considering gender, however, not when considering different identity groups.

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[3] The words in italic are also formatted this way in the original text.

	whole, in special, the voice of the ones excluded from the system (TENÓRIO, 2016b).	representations such as working class or immigrants.	

Source: Developed by the author

Moreover, to enhance the research that began in my dissertation, this project seeks to incorporate the experience of the Irish Convention on the Constitution into the analysis. Irish political history is very active when it comes to conflicts and popular mobilizations. In the 18th century the roots of Irish republicanism emerged through a conflict which aimed to unify and make Ireland independent. It began as popular pressure for land due to a rise in population. Additionally, there were increasing tensions between Catholics and Protestants, being the second group representatives of a minority elite. (ELLIOTT, 1978).

The Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.) emerged within this context seeking to reestablish Ireland as a land free from British interference, its ideals go back to the French Revolution and from an early emancipation attempt in 1790s. They were part of a phenomenon of martial voluntarism in Ireland that occurred between 1912 to 1922. I.R.A. and Sinn Fein, a political party, conducted a guerilla campaign from 1918 to 1921 which eventually led to the exit of Ireland from British Commonwealth and the formation of the Irish Republic in 1949. Moreover, since the new constitution ratified in 1937 thought a plebiscite, its Article 46 predicts amendments that should be submitted to a referendum after passing by both Houses of the *Oireachtas* (WHITE, 1989; HART, 1999).

Nevertheless, peace in Ireland would only be achieved later in 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement, which consisted of a international treaty signed between Ireland and the United Kingdom committing both nations to bilateral peace, and being considered a model for post-conflict transformation influencing until today peace processes across the globe. (NÍ AOLÁIN, 2023)

The idea for the Convention on the Constitution began as an initiative in response to a financial crisis in 2008, which also brought a crisis of trust and governance. The processes started with the organization if the We the Citizens project in 2011 led by Irish universities to test the impact of deliberative forums on democracy. Following the project, the newly elected parliament authorized the creation of the Convention on the Constitution, which selected random citizens and legislators to address key political and

constitutional issues and produced 43 recommendations when it ended in 2014 (FARRELL & SUITER, 2019).

This approach will allow for the integration of results that can improve *Gestão Social* by developing new methodologies and perspectives from different parts of the world. There are many participatory experiences using ICTs that can and should be further researched to better develop alternative methods for making digital media useful for democracy and deliberation. Some examples, and suggestions for future research, are listed below:

Chart 02 – Participatory experiences using ICTs

Process/ Experience	Location
The Pirate Party	Iceland
Better Reykjavik and Better Neighbourhoods	Iceland
LabHacker and eDemocracia	Brazil
Evidence Checks	UK
Public Reading Stage	UK
Decide Madrid	Spain
Podemos	Spain
Parlement et Citoyens	France
Madame Mayor, I have an idea	France
Five Star Movement	Italy
Estonian People's Assembly and Rahvvaalgatus	Estonia
Finnish Parliament	Finland
vTaiwan	Taiwan

Source: adapted from SIMON, J. *et al*. Digital democracy. A summary report for practitioners. UK:Nesta, feb, 2017.

Furthermore, constitutions reflect the foundational principles of governance and democracy, offering mechanisms for citizen participation and government transparency. The Constitutions of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Brazil, while crafted in different socio-political contexts, converge on some key democratic principles, albeit with distinct emphases and implementations. This academic exploration compares their respective provisions to elucidate commonalities in fostering participatory democracy and transparency.

Participation: Empowering Citizens

1.Ireland (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*):

The Irish Constitution, enacted in 1937, emphasizes direct citizen involvement through referenda. Article 46 outlines the process for constitutional amendments, requiring public approval through a referendum, thereby ensuring that citizens have a

direct voice in shaping the nation's fundamental laws. Article 6 declares that all powers derive from the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives, affirming the centrality of public participation.

2. Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973):

The Act integrates mechanisms for participatory governance within its unique context of power-sharing to address historical conflicts. Section 25 of the Act establishes the framework for a Legislative Assembly, designed to represent diverse interests and ensure inclusive decision-making processes. The emphasis on communal representation underpins the principle of equitable participation, reflecting a commitment to democratic engagement across different groups.

3. Brazil (Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil, 1988):

Article 14 of Brazil's Constitution explicitly provides mechanisms for direct democracy, including plebiscites, referenda, and popular initiatives. This ensures citizens can influence key legislative and constitutional decisions. Article 1 establishes the principle of sovereignty residing with the people, exercised through representatives or directly via constitutional tools, reinforcing a robust participatory framework.

Transparency: Accountability and Access to Information

1. Ireland:

While the Irish Constitution does not explicitly enshrine transparency as a standalone principle, it incorporates provisions that ensure government accountability. Article 34 emphasizes open courts, which underpin public access to judicial proceedings as a form of transparency. Amendments and legislative acts, such as the Freedom of Information Acts, supplement the constitutional framework, ensuring public access to government documents and decisions.

2. Northern Ireland:

The Northern Ireland Constitution Act promotes transparency through accountability mechanisms tied to devolution. Provisions requiring the publication of legislative acts and the scrutiny of executive actions foster openness. Section 20 underscores the role of oversight in governance, ensuring that administrative actions align with democratic principles.

3. Brazil:

Article 5, Item XXXIII, of the Brazilian Constitution explicitly guarantees the right to access public information, obligating government agencies to provide information of collective or personal interest unless restricted by law. Articles 70 and 71 establish rigorous oversight mechanisms, including the role of the Federal Audit Court, to ensure fiscal transparency and accountability in public administration

Chart 03 – Comparison Constitutions: Ireland x Northern Ireland x Brazil

Common Features and Comparative Insights			
Feature	Ireland	Northern Ireland	Brazil
Citizen Participation	Article 6s and 46	Section 25	Article 1, Article 14
Access to Information	Supplemented by Freedom of Information Acts	Section 20	Article 5 (XXXIII)
Transparency	Article 34 (open courts)	Legislative and executive scrutiny mechanisms	Articles 70, 71 (audit mechanisms)

Source: Elaborated by the author

The constitutions of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Brazil collectively underscore the foundational importance of participation and transparency in governance. Ireland's focus on referenda and judicial openness, Northern Ireland's power-sharing and scrutiny mechanisms, and Brazil's comprehensive provisions for direct democracy and access to information demonstrate shared commitments to empowering citizens and ensuring governmental accountability. These principles, enshrined in constitutional articles, reflect universal values vital to democratic societies while tailored to their respective historical and cultural contexts.

Further on, this thesis is inserted in the Regional Development field, which together with sustainable development are essential frameworks for addressing disparities and fostering progress within specific territories. Regional Development focuses on reducing inequalities by stimulating economic growth, enhancing social well-being, and fostering cultural and political inclusion. Sustainable development complements this by emphasizing the need for progress that preserves the environment, respects social equity, and promotes economic viability. Together, they provide a foundation for localized yet globally aligned growth initiatives. In Brazil, regional development has been a priority

due to significant disparities across its vast territory. Policies targeting regions like the Legal Amazon have aimed to integrate peripheral areas with the national economy, albeit with mixed results due to challenges like environmental degradation and insufficient social inclusion (DE LIMA,2021; THEIS *et al*, 2024; RUGGERIO, 2021; JESUS *et al*., 2024)

Sustainable development, as outlined in the Brundtland Report, emphasizes the need for progress that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. It integrates three pillars—social, economic, and environmental sustainability—into a cohesive framework. This approach underpins global initiatives like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to address pressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. Despite its broad acceptance, implementing sustainable development remains challenging, particularly in regions where economic growth often comes at the expense of environmental preservation and social equity (HALKOS *et al*,2021; RUGGERIO, 2021).

Further on, universities are pivotal in driving regional development by fostering innovation, cultivating human capital, and generating knowledge. They act as hubs of research and education, contributing to local economies and societal progress. Experiences from regions like Silicon Valley underscore how universities can serve as catalysts for economic transformation. The Universidade Federal do Tocantins (UFT) has emerged as a key player in promoting regional development in Tocantins. Through its Postgraduate Program in Regional Development (PPGDR), UFT addresses critical issues such as urban planning, environmental sustainability, and agribusiness. The program focuses on generating localized knowledge, fostering innovation, and developing human capital, thereby enhancing the region's socioeconomic fabric (SERRA *et al.*, 2018; SOUSA *et al.*,2021).

UFT's research and outreach efforts also align with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in areas like education (SDG 4), sustainable cities (SDG 11), and climate action (SDG 13). This alignment ensures that the university's initiatives contribute to global sustainability while addressing local challenges. The Universidade Federal do Tocantins (UFT) exemplifies the interplay of these frameworks, contributing significantly to the advancement of the Tocantins region and beyond through education, research, and community engagement (SOUSA *et al.*,2021; HALKOS *et al.*,2021).

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction, which includes the justification for this research and its goals. The second chapter concerning the theoretical framework, contains three sub-chapters: the first concerning *Gestão Social,* the following about ICTs, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Democracy and finally Ireland. The third chapter presents the methodology. The fourth chapter includes discussion, results, and final considerations. This thesis also contains an appendix , which presents a pilot project intended for *Universidade Federal do Tocantins*. The next topic discusses the justification for this research project.

1.1. Justification

Gestão Social is a social sciences area that since 1990 has a growing number of studies centers, laboratories, post-graduation courses and scientific journals. There are some important examples such as: *Programa de Estudos em Gestão Social* from *Fundação Getúlio Vargas*(PEGS/EBAPE/FGV); *Centro Interdisciplinar de Desenvolvimento e Gestão social* from *Universidade Federal da Bahia*(CIAGS/UFBA); *Centro de Empreendedorismo Social e Administração em Terceiro Setor* from *Universidade de São Paulo* (CEATS/USP); *Núcleo de Estudos de Administração do Terceiro Setor* from *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo* (NEATS/PUC-SP); *Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Pesquisas e Estudos sobre o Terceiro Setor* from *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* (NIPETS/UFRGS); *Laboratório Interdisciplinar de Estudos em Gestão Social da Universidade do Ceará – Campus Cariri* (LIEGS/UFC-Cariri); *Núcleo de Estudos em Administração Pública e Gestão Social* from *Universidade Federal de Lavras* (NEAPEGS/ UFLA); *Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Estudos e Tecnologias em Gestão Social* from *Universidade Federal do Vale do São Francisco* (NIGS/UNIVASF); *Grupo de Estudos e Pesquisas em Gestão Social* from *Universidade Federal do Tocantins* (GEPGS/UFT), *Núcleo de Pesquisas em Ética e Gestão Social* (NUPEGS/PUC-Minas), *Grupo de Pesquisa de Gestão Social e do Desenvolvimento Local* (GESDEL/UNAMA) and also Other 21 research groups containing *Gestão Social* in the title (CANÇADO *et al.*, 2022).

Moreover, several events related to *Gestão Social* contribute to its development. The *Gestão Social* Research Network (*Rede de Pesquisadores em Gestão Social* – RGS) represents a crucial milestone for advancing and disseminating knowledge in the concept of *Gestão Social* in Brazil. Established in 2003 during a meeting at *the Fundação Getúlio Vargas* (FGV) in São Paulo, the RGS has played a key role in fostering collaboration among researchers dedicated to discussing and promoting *Gestão Social* practices within the country. A pivotal moment came in 2007 with the creation of the National Meeting of *Gestão Social* Researchers (*Encontro Nacional de Pesquisadores em Gestão Social* – ENAPEGS), which became a space for exchanging ideas, presenting research, and expanding the concept (DE OLIVEIRA & CANÇADO, 2023).

The ENAPEGS has seen significant growth over the years, both in participation and in the number of works presented, starting with just 14 articles and experience reports in 2007 and reaching 377 contributions by 2020. The increasing prominence of *Gestão*

Social within Brazil's academic landscape is further evidenced by the rise in theses and dissertations between 1996 and 2017, which shows an impressive growth of 98.4%. However, since 2017, academic production has faced a decline, largely due to funding cuts in postgraduate programs, particularly affecting scholarship grants. The number of theses and dissertations listed in the Capes Catalogue fell from 74,370 in 2017 to 57,717 in 2019. This trend is not unique to *Gestão Social* but reflects a broader issue within Brazil's higher education system. Despite this, the RGS and ENAPEGS have been vital in promoting and advancing *Gestão Social* in Brazil, though challenges such as funding cuts and concentrated research supervision remain ongoing concerns (DE OLIVEIRA & CANÇADO, 2023).

Figure 01 - Map of Brazil with the location of some *Gestão Social* Research Institutions

PEGS/EBAPE/FGV
CIAGS/UFBA
CEATS/USP
NEATS/PUC-SP
NIPETS/UFRGS
LIEGS/UFC-Cariri
NEAPEGS/UFLA
NIGS/UNIVASF
GEPGS/UFT
NUPEGS/PUC-Minas
GESDEL/UNAMA
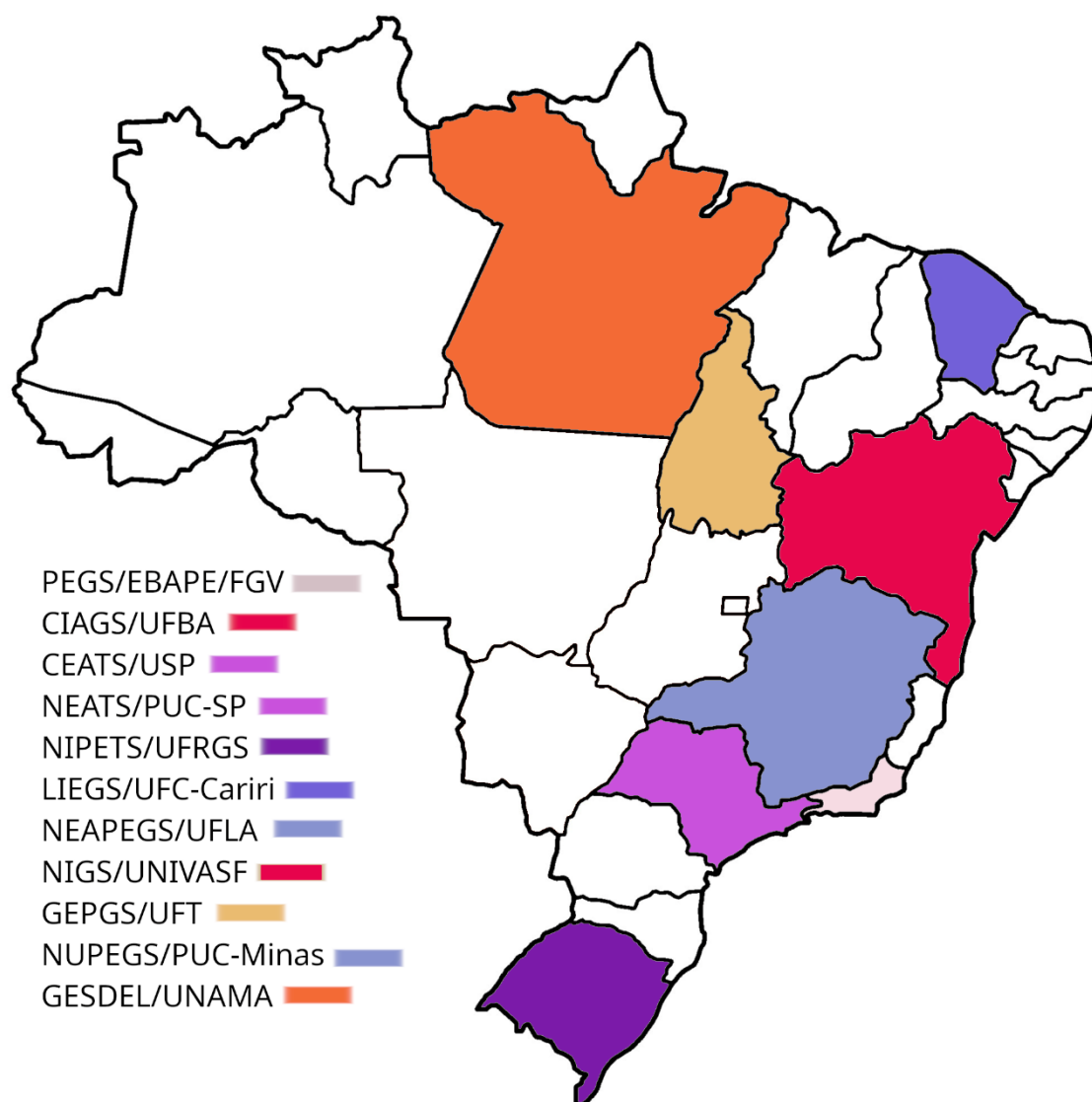
Source: Elaborated by the author

Chart 04 - Institutionalization of the Concept of *Gestão Social*

Year	Event	Local	Institution
1990	Creation of the *Gestão Social* Studies Program – PEGS/EBAPE/FGV	Rio de Janeiro/RJ	EBAPE/FGV
1992	Ibero-American Seminar on the Development of Professors in *Gestão Social*	Santa Cruz de La Sierra, Bolívia	INDES/BID
1997	Executive Course in Design and Management of Social Policies and Programs	Washington D.C., United States	INDES/BID

2001	Creation of the Interdisciplinary Center for Development and *Gestão Social* - CIAGS/UFBA	Salvador/BA	EA/UFBA
2003	1st Meeting of the Network of *Gestão Social* Researchers	São Paulo/SP	EAESP/FGV
2006	First class of the Multidisciplinary and Professional Master's in Development and *Gestão Social*	Salvador/BA	CIAGS/EA/UFBA
	Creation of the Interdisciplinary Laboratory of Studies in *Gestão Social* - LIEGS	Juazeiro do Norte/CE	UFC
2007	1st ENAPEGS (National Meeting of *Gestão Social*)	Juazeiro do Norte/CE	UFC
	Creation of the *Gestão Social* Journal	Salvador/BA	CIAGS/EA/UFBA
2008	2nd ENAPEGS	Palmas/TO	UFT
	First class of the Professional Master's in *Gestão Social*, Education, and Local Development	Belo Horizonte/MG	UMA University Center
	Launch of the CAPES Pró-ADM call (*Gestão Social* as one of the areas covered).	Brasília/DF	CAPES
2009	3rd ENAPEGS	Juazeiro/BA e Petrolina/PE	UNIVASF
	Creation of the Technological Undergraduate Program in Public and *Gestão Social*	Salvador/BA	EA/UFBA
	Creation of the Undergraduate Program in Public and Social Administration	Porto Alegre/RS	EA/UFRGS
	1st EMAPEGS (National Meeting of Graduate Students in *Gestão Social*)	Lavras/MG	UFLA
	Elimination of the specific theme of *Gestão Social* at ANPAD (Discontinued in 2009)	São Paulo/SP	Public Administration Area of ANPAD
	Creation of the Public Administration and *Gestão Social* Journal - APGS	Lavras/MG	UFV
2010	4th ENAPEGS	Lavras/MG	UFLA
	2nd EMAPEGS	Viçosa/MG	UFV
	Creation of the Observatory of Education in *Gestão Social* - OFGS	Salvador/BA	EA/UFBA
	Creation of the Nau Social Journal	Salvador/BA	OFGS /EA/UFBA
2011	5th ENAPEGS	Florianópolis/SC	UDESC
	3rd EMAPEGS	Lavras/MG	UFLA

	Creation of the Undergraduate Program in Public Administration: Public and *Gestão Social*	Juazeiro do Norte/CE	UFCA
	Creation of the Interdisciplinary Journal in *Gestão Social* - RIGS	Salvador/BA	CIAGS/EA/UFBA
2012	6th ENAPEGS	São Paulo/SP	PUC-SP
2013	7th ENAPEGS	Belém/PA	UNAMA
	4th EMAPEGS	Viçosa/MG	UFV
2014	8th ENAPEGS	Cachoeira/BA	UFRB
	Launch of the Dictionary for Education in *Gestão Social*	Cachoeira/BA	OFGS/EA/UFBA
2015	5th EMAPEGS	Lavras/MG	UFLA
	Reinstatement of the specific theme on *Gestão Social* at ANPAD through the creation of the theme "Intersections between Public Management and *Gestão Social*"	Belo Horizonte/MG	Public Administration Area of ANPAD
	Meeting of the Network of *Gestão Social* Researchers	Belo Horizonte/MG	PUC-Minas
2016	9th ENAPEGS	Porto Alegre/RS	UFRGS and other regional partnerships
2017	Meeting of the Network of *Gestão Social* Researchers	Natal/RN	UFRN
	Course in *Gestão Social* (Distance Learning)	Fortaleza/CE	Demócrito Rocha Foundation
	Creation of the Observatory of Education in *Gestão Social* - OFGS	Salvador/BA	EA/UFBA
2018	10th ENAPEGS	Juazeiro do Norte/CE	UFCA
2019	Meeting of the Network of *Gestão Social* Researchers	Brasília/DF	UnB
	1st International Meeting of *Gestão Social* (which later came to be known as Latin American)	Quito/Cuenca - Equador	Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Universidad del Azuay e Escuela Politécnica Nacional (Ecuador)
	Creation of the Latin American Network of *Gestão Social*	Quito/Cuenca - Equador	Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Universidad del Azuay e Escuela Politécnica Nacional (Ecuador)
	11th ENAPEGS (scheduled for Maceió, but held only virtually, called pre-ENAPEGS due to the COVID-19 pandemic)	Remote	UFAL e Universidade Tiradentes – UNIT
2020	11th ENAPEGS	Remote	UFAL e Universidade Tiradentes – UNIT

2021	II Latin American Meeting of *Gestão Social*	Remote	Universidad Del Valle (Colômbia)
	The 12th ENAPEGS was scheduled to take place, but postponed to 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic		UFRRJ and other partner institutions
2022	III Latin American Meeting of *Gestão Social*	Ijuí/RS	UNIJUÍ
	III Latin American Meeting of *Gestão Social*	Seropédica/RJ (conducted simultaneously in a remote manner)	UFRRJ and other partner institutions
2023	Meeting of the Network of *Gestão Social* Researchers	Assembly via GoogleMeet/	29,08, 09/09, 10/10 and 06/11
2024	Meeting of the Network of *Gestão Social* Researchers	Assembly via GoogleMeet	09/09/2024
2025	Meeting of the Network of *Gestão Social* Researchers	Planned Salvador/BA	UFBA and partner organizations

Source: Table adapted from Cançado, Silva Júnior and Cançado (2017) with support from Airton Cardoso Cançado and Fernando Guilherme Tenório

The goal is to ensure that people's expectations are met by increasing popular participation, ultimately leading to emancipation. Participation and debate through new technologies can strengthen democracy by expanding the public sphere and facilitating citizen-government deliberation. Digital democracy, defined as the use of ICTs to enhance participation and public decision-making, is a powerful methodology for engaging groups that were previously marginalized, thereby establishing a new relationship between these groups and the government. By making democracy more representative, new technologies can also enhance its legitimacy by providing greater freedom (SIMON, 2017).

The constitutional reform in Ireland conducted during the 2010s is considered pioneers in integrating technology with democracy (SUTEU, 2015). Ireland focused more on the transparency being a process which was more inclusive and, by utilizing mini-publics, which are assemblies of randomly selected citizens tasked with engaging in deep deliberation on significant policy issues, contributed to an expanded capacity for citizen deliberation, resulting in a substantial portion of its recommendations being approved (SUTEU,2015; SUITER, 2020; FARRELL, 2020).

Furthermore, Ireland produced unique results, as the country was able to hold multiple successful assemblies using the mini-publics method since the Convention on the Constitution, resulting in three referendums from 2015 to 2021. Additionally, the Convention on the Constitution and its subsequent processes provided empirical evidence

that encourages institutionalized deliberative democracy, making Irish citizens' assemblies an important reference for researchers in deliberative democracy (COURANT, 2021).

The use of ICTs, especially the internet and social media, has been identified as both a significant support for and a challenge to democracy. However, it must be considered that technology itself has always been a double-edged sword. For example, the radio was used as a tool for spreading Nazi propaganda during World War II, while the Allies also employed it to support resistance against the Nazi regime (FISCHLI & MULDOON, 2024; LORENZ-SPREEN, 2023). Several other technological innovations have followed the same trajectory, such as airplanes and books (which can be used by think tanks to promote their own ideas).

Therefore, it is necessary to explore alternatives that address the other edge of ICTs. Options include external governance (GAUJA, 2021) or the creation of new platforms capable of ensuring a more democratic online environment. Cançado *et al*. (2022) also present the use of ICTs as a potential alternative to facilitate more direct participation, enabling people to submit their opinions and suggestions and actively engage in the process.

Moreover, Cançado *et al*. (2022) established a research schedule concerning the concept of *Gestão Social* as an evolving scientific discipline to ensure that it develops more theoretical and methodological approaches for its consolidation in applied social sciences. This is illustrated in Frame 6.2 of the referenced work, where one of the goals is to identify possibilities for using ICTs to enhance direct participation in the concept of *Gestão Social*. This project can directly contribute to this goal by incorporating new experiences.

Additionally, it can be said that this doctoral thesis is situated within the *Sociedade*, *Políticas Públicas* e *Desenvolvimento Regional* research line, as it seeks to enhance *Gestão Social* concept by analyzing problems and new methodologies involving societal participation in the state. This approach aims to empower social actors in the implementation of public policies for regional development, thereby improving democracy itself. The following subchapter details these research goals, dividing them into general and specific objectives.

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1.2. Goals

1.2.1. General

To analyze and discuss the Irish Convention on the Constitution process from the perspective of *Gestão Social*.

1.2.2. Specific Goals

To analyze how ICTs supported direct participation in the Irish Convention on the Constitution.

To identify and analyze the main concepts of *Gestão Social* in the reform process of the Irish Convention on the Constitution.

To study the procedures for popular participation adopted in the Irish Convention on the Constitution process.

Further on, the next chapter brings the theoretical discussions of this doctoral research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. *Gestão Social*

Gestão Social is a growing concept within the applied social sciences. Since 1990, the number of study centers, laboratories, postgraduate courses, and scientific journals in this area has been steadily increasing. It consists of a concept that seeks to enhance social participation, ensuring that people's expectations are met while balancing the social aspect with the state and the market. In other words, it favors the collective over individuality, thereby improving democracy.

According to Paula Aguiar-Barbosa and Chim-Miki (2020), *Gestão Social* has been studied since the early 1990s, with over 30 years of publications that contribute to a vast literature. One of its earliest definitions comes from Tenório (1998). Cançado, Pereira, and Tenório (2015) indicate that Tenório's first contact with the term *Gestão Social* occurred through a text by Giorgio Rovida from 1985. The concept had already emerged in the early 1990s but gained prominence when it was proposed, primarily through Tenório (1998), as a counterpoint to Strategic Management (DE PAULA AGUIAR-BRABOSA & CHIM-MIKI, 2020; CANÇADO; PEREIRA; TENÓRIO, 2015; TENÓRIO; TEIXEIRA, 2021).

In 2002, Fischer proposed five propositions for *Gestão Social*, or Social Development Management. In her words, briefly: (1) It is a process of mediation that articulates multiple levels of individual and social power; (2) it is a concept of knowledge and a space of hybrid and contradictory practices where cooperation does not exclude competition and vice versa; (3) while being ethical and responsible, it should also be efficient and effective; (4) it involves the management of networks and social relations, which are influenced by people, behaviors, interaction capabilities, and other human aspects; (5) it is a process immersed in cultural contexts that shape Social Development Management itself and are, in turn, shaped by it (FISCHER, 2002).

Following these propositions Fischer (2002) concludes:

> The *Gestão Social* or social development management field is reflexive of the practices and of the knowledge built by multiple disciplines, designing itself as a pre-paradigmatic proposal, which is being formulated as research schedule and action by many research groups and centers in Brazil and abroad, as well by institutions of different natures that acts on local development (FISCHER,2002, p.29).[4]

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[4] Translated by the Author

From this, it can be perceived that *Gestão Social* is an interdisciplinary concept, according to Fischer (2002), which has been growing both nationally and internationally while being applied in some institutions seeking local development.

Furthermore, Fischer (2007) asserts that if management is understood as a function rather than a tool, aiming to create a fairer society, the distinction among organizations belonging to the market, state, or third sector becomes irrelevant, as all should be guided by social considerations. Therefore, this understanding is crucial for grasping the concept of *Gestão Social*, which is defined here as a relational act capable of guiding and regulating processes through the broad mobilization of actors in communicative actions, resulting in intra- and interorganizational partnerships. As such, decentralized and participative structures aim for well-planned, viable, and sustainable collective outcomes (FISCHER, 2007).

Carrion (2007) describes *Gestão Social* as a search for new approaches to address the problem of social exclusion caused by neo-liberalism. It is not simply a matter of transposing the principles of business management to the social field. *Gestão Social* seeks integrated local development along with financial and economic sustainability whenever possible. To achieve this goal, it is a theory that recognizes the conflicts of interest between society, the state, and the market (CARRION, 2007).

The state should be capable of ensuring local development through inclusive public policies, emphasizing administrative decentralization and cooperation among the public, private, and third sectors. The greatest challenge of *Gestão Social* is to ensure that these interactions are conducted based on solidarity. While some consider this concept utopian, Carrion (2007) argues that it is indeed a utopia; however, as a proposition in development, it seeks to build a more humane society. No other paradigm can alter social morphology without the political will to do so. Nevertheless, *Gestão Social* brings together tools and postulates capable of fostering change toward a more inclusive society (CARRION, 2007).

According to Boullosa and Schommer (2008), *Gestão Social* can be viewed as a way of managing, a management goal, and a field of knowledge. Initially, it can be defined as a management approach that prioritizes social aspects rather than being strictly economic. Thus, it is characterized as a form of management that originates in organizational and social contexts not belonging to the market or the state, but rather to a

public non-state sphere of action within civil society (BOULLOSA; SCHOMMER, 2008; 2009).

These authors also state that *Gestão Social*, in contrast to strategic management, demonstrates its potential for innovation. Different practice communities and strategic groups have embraced this concept; without it, they would remain scattered groups with no connection to each other. Consequently, *Gestão Social* has united them, providing meaning and significance to their efforts. However, this movement transformed *Gestão Social* from a process into a product, which hindered its innovative capabilities (BOULLOSA; SCHOMMER, 2008; 2009).

However, according to Boullosa *et al.* (2009) despite the authors' effort to establish *Gestão Social* as a distinct field of knowledge grounded in epistemological rigor its epistemic boundaries remain blurred. For instance, according to this author, while the text emphasizes the dialogical nature of *Gestão Social*, it struggles to delineate its divergence from established paradigms such as public management or collaborative governance clearly. Such theoretical flexibility risks rendering the concept overly malleable and prone to co-optation (BOULLOSA; SCHOMMER, 2009).

Additionally, Boullosa *et al*. (2008) states that *Gestão Social* is deeply rooted in the Brazilian sociopolitical context, drawing heavily from the principles of participatory democracy enshrined in the 1988 Federal Constitution. However, its transferability to other contexts with different democratic traditions or institutional frameworks remains uncertain. Boullosa and Schommer (2008) caution that without addressing these contextual nuances, the model risks being perceived as an idealistic framework rather than a practical governance approach (BOULLOSA; SCHOMMER, 2009).

França Filho (2008) argues that one major concern lies in the practical application of *Gestão Social*. While the authors advocate for horizontal and inclusive decision-making processes, the methodological tools proposed are insufficiently detailed for consistent application across diverse organizational and societal contexts. The author also highlights the lack of robust methodological frameworks to evaluate the impact and scalability of *Gestão Social*, particularly in large-scale governance systems. Furthermore, the reliance on qualitative methodologies, while valuable, raises concerns about replicability and generalizability (FRANÇA FILHO, 2008).

Justen (2016) defines *Gestão Social* as an antithetical conception in relation to strategic management, emphasizing collective decision-making, dialogicity, and language intelligibility as part of a transparent process aimed at emancipation. This aligns with the definition provided by Cançado *et al.* (2015a), which will be discussed further ahead. Justen concurs with Cançado *et al.* when stating that the ultimate goal of *Gestão Social* is Emancipation, reflecting Freire's (1979, as cited in Justen, 2016) idea of dialogical pedagogy.

Justen (2016) cites Freire (1979), who argues that emancipation can only be achieved in communion; individuals do not free themselves alone. According to Freire (1979), this liberation occurs through critical and emancipatory dialogue. Therefore, dialogicity is essential for emancipation. Moreover, Justen posits that emancipation is only achieved when the recipient of a public policy is considered a subject capable of reflecting on the world and their place within it. This condition is further enhanced in public spheres of dialogue (JUSTEN, 2016).

Additionally, Justen argues that inclusion is a prerequisite for emancipation. Inclusion and plurality can only be realized through isonomic treatment, where all human beings are valued equally. He concludes that the right to dialogue is inalienable and should encompass all social relations. Only through effective, inclusive, and plural participation, exercised under equitable conditions, can individuals be regarded as "occurrence subjects" (JUSTEN, 2016; Freire, 2011, as cited in JUSTEN, 2016).

Justen (2016) then, concludes that:

> The *Gestão Social*, this way, enables to identify the incompleteness of the economist perspective of sustainability, recognizing the nature of a living system, as well as a man, that, due to it, needs an approach in which the consequential utilitarian calculus is complemented by the capacity of'[…] thinking the world, thinking in the world, having a rational and calculating activity, but simultaneously putting in question yourself and your environment'(GAULEJAC, 2007). That, for sure, demands a dialogical, collaborative and communicative approach, something *Gestão Social* has to offer (JUSTEN, 2016, p.155).[5]

Another relevant discussion concerning the conceptualization of Gestão Social by Alcântara and Pereira (2017) pertains to its locus, framed as an encounter between what Habermas calls the *Lebenswelt* and the system. The *Lebenswelt* can be understood as the domain of culture, society, and personality, while the system encompasses the State and the Market. Through the interaction between these two realms, the concept of

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[5] Translated by the Author

Habermasian communicative power emerges, which manifests in the public sphere through deliberation and stands in opposition to administrative power.

Thus, in light of the relationship between *Gestão Social* and Strategic Management, as discussed by Tenório in 1998, civil society, social movements, and the third sector serve as the loci of *Gestão Social*. Consequently, it can be argued that the market represents a space where *Gestão Social* faces greater challenges. In this context, *Gestão Social* has the capacity to comprehend the contradictions between the *Lebenswelt* and the system, thereby fostering democratic practices (ALCÂNTARA & PEREIRA, 2017).

Carmo *et al*. (2022) regard *Gestão Social* as an approach that emphasizes dialogue and active participation within organizations, the State, and society. It evolves through daily practices in organizational and social activities, benefiting from a diversity of knowledge that extends beyond traditional technical expertise to include community experiences. However, the development of concrete methodologies and tools that can guide the practice of *Gestão Social* is necessary. Moreover, these methodologies should promote the participation of all stakeholders, facilitating dialogue regarding their demands and reaching consensus (CARMO *et al*., 2022).

Further on, the authors discuss participatory methodologies for *Gestão Social*, which should prioritize the inclusion of all participants, regardless of their economic, educational, or formal power conditions, ensuring that everyone can contribute on discussing community problems and developing solutions. Also, these methodologies should be continuous and adaptable. Then, a participatory cycle is proposed following the steps below (CARMO *et al*., 2022).:

1. **Awareness and Mobilization:** Initial sharing of information about the work to be developed, aiming to integrate social actors into the proposal.

2. **Participatory Diagnosis:** Analysis of the current situation of the community and preparation for planning.

3. **Participatory Planning:** Development of strategic and operational plans to achieve the desired objectives.

4. **Implementation of Activities and Projects:** Execution of specific projects.

5. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Replanning:** Monitoring actions, comparing what was planned with what was accomplished, and adjusting the course when necessary.

Carmo *et al*. (2022) state that *Gestão Social* should incorporate methodological tools that value inclusive participation, allowing all social subjects to influence the public sphere. Integrative methodologies, adapted to each social context, prevent these practices from becoming superficial or serving dominant interests that exclude and manipulate (CARMO *et al*., 2022).

Gomes (2022) asserts that *Gestão Social* promotes citizen participation in decision-making within the public sphere, as it is grounded in the idea of participatory democracy stemming from Habermas's concept of communicative action. However, he warns that since the 19th century, the public sphere has been manipulated by private corporations, especially the media, which distort public opinion to serve commercial and political interests. As such, the *Lebenswelt* needs to be reclaimed to enable communication free from coercion, where the best argument prevails (GOMES, 2022).

The author concludes that *Gestão Social* differentiates itself from traditional strategic management by rejecting bureaucratic structures and emphasizing citizen participation. Grounded in Habermasian thought, it is considered the most suitable management model for a participatory democracy, overcoming the limitations of the representative system (GOMES, 2022).

The concept of *Gestão Social* used in this work follows the perspective of Cançado *et al*. (2022), which aligns with Tenório's main ideas as follows. This perspective views *Gestão Social* as an antonym to Strategic Management, with the basis for its differentiation found in Habermas's work. According to Tenório *et al*. (2014), the concept of *Gestão Social* itself is grounded in Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and incorporates concepts such as citizenship, communicative action, public sphere, and consensus. In this sense, *Gestão Social* is understood as being situated within the parameters of modernity, requiring enlightenment through a shared, dialogic management approach to confront technobureaucracy (TENÓRIO, 1998; TENÓRIO *et al*., 2014; TENÓRIO & ARAÚJO, 2021).

Cançado, Pereira, and Tenório (2015), prior to Paula Aguiar-Barbosa and Chim-Miki (2020), also identified several characteristics presented by authors addressing

Gestão Social, including deliberative democracy, dialogicity, emancipation, public sphere, self-interest properly understood, intersubjectivity, rationality, solidarity, and sustainability. The previous definition, which states, "In an effort to synthesize, we can define *Gestão Social* as a dialectical process of social organization typical of the public sphere, based on self-interest properly understood and whose purpose is the emancipation of man"[6] (Cançado *et al*., 2015, p. 178), now introduces a deeper relationship between self-interest properly understood and emancipation.

Figure 02 – Theoretical approximation for *Gestão Social*
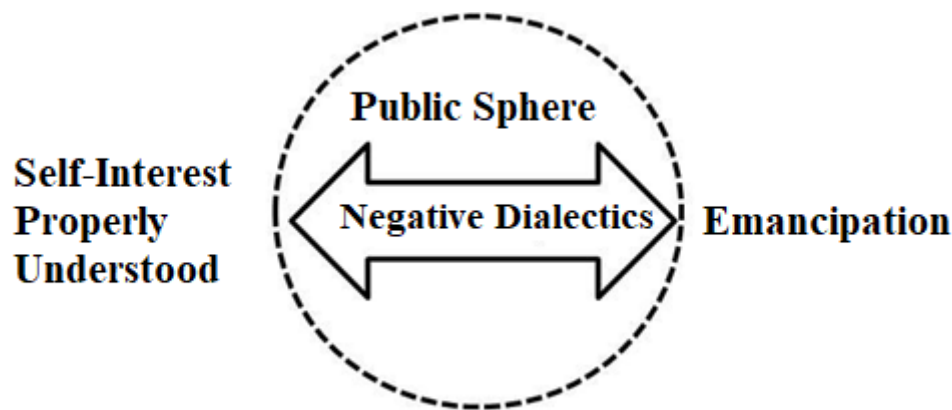
Source: Adapted from Cançado *et al.* (2013).

Hernández (2016) investigated the state of the art in management and *Gestão Social* in both Spanish and English. The selected texts were drawn from a series of books compiled by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and other international organizations, along with articles from electronic journals. The primary selection criterion was timeliness, using older texts to illustrate the evolution of research over time. The author considers it evident that the concepts of management and *Gestão Social* are often defined only superficially. This lack of depth is a consistent issue in both Spanish- and English-speaking contexts, where there is an absence of well-defined and solid conceptual frameworks for *Gestão Social* (HERNÁNDEZ, 2016).

The author searched for articles in Spanish containing the terms *gerencia* and *gestión social* in their titles, resulting in a collection of 160 articles. The only selection criterion was the inclusion of this term. It became clear that there is limited convergence among these articles. One category relates to *gestión social* as a subfield within business management. Another category addresses *Gestão Social* as exercised by third-sector

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[6] Translated by the author

organizations, often tied to organizational studies. A third category focuses on the management of public policies and social programs, while a fourth centers on social actors as agents of change within society (HERNÁNDEZ, 2016).

Marinho *et al.* (2024) followed a similar path when investigating Social Management and Social Administration texts published in English. Their research identified five categories of social management, with "Government Control Over Society" being the most prominent. This category features 11 papers, predominantly from China (9 papers, 82%), where social management is portrayed as a method of state authority exerting control over individual rights, in stark contrast to the Brazilian approach (MARINHO *et al.*, 2024).

The "Management of Public Policies" category consists of 6 papers, with half originating from China. This perspective, which was common in Brazil and Latin America during the 1990s, has largely been left behind in recent years. Interestingly, there are signs of a potential shift in Chinese perceptions of social management, moving closer to the Brazilian model. Four articles suggest that public participation in China is on the rise, though some authors caution that this participation often remains superficial, as the government still maintains control over local councils (MARINHO *et al.*, 2024).

In the United Kingdom, papers describe social management as an interdisciplinary academic field, which somewhat aligns with Brazilian public management but continues to exclude other stakeholders. Only 13% of the articles reflect the Brazilian perspective, and none of these are from China. In conclusion, while some papers resonate with the Brazilian concept of social management, they often fall short of fully embodying the core principles of collective decision-making, transparency, and emancipation (MARINHO *et al.*, 2024).

Therefore, it is argued that the academic concept of *Gestão Social* is a significant contribution from Brazil to both the administrative field and interdisciplinary studies. In the context of public policy, *Gestão Social* is regarded as a methodology for development in various forms (HERNÁNDEZ, 2016; MARINHO *et al.*, 2024).

Considering the theoretical categories of *Gestão Social*, Tenório (2005) emphasizes that the public sphere assumes equality of individual rights and discussions conducted without violence. It serves as the space where individuals can present their inquiries through mutual understanding. Additionally, Tenório asserts that civil society

and the public sphere are complementary; the latter is the arena in which dialogue between civil society and the state occurs (TENÓRIO, 2005). The public sphere is where public opinion is formed, functioning as a network for communicating content, positions, and the formation of opinions that coalesce into public sentiment on specific themes. In this space, society, the state, and the market interact dialogically (PERES JÚNIOR *et al*., 2013).

Gestão Social, therefore, aims to construct a new public sphere that brings the population closer to politics. This subjective space is essential for enabling individuals to deliberate about their needs and future. *Gestão Social* evolves as individual emancipation is facilitated by replacing the bourgeois public sphere with this new subjective space, characterized by the theoretical categories of Deliberative Democracy, Dialogicity, Intersubjectivity, and Rationality (CANÇADO *et al*., 2022).

Another key concept within *Gestão Social* is deliberative citizenship, understood as a political deliberative action in which individuals must engage in democratic processes while fulfilling various roles in society. It implies that the legitimacy of political decisions arises from discussions guided by inclusion, pluralism, participative equality, autonomy, and the common good (TENÓRIO, 1998; TENÓRIO, 2005; CANÇADO *et al*., 2015).

Deliberative citizenship also falls within the broader debate between liberals and republicans, where the latter group seeks to negotiate what is best for their community or society. This perspective accounts for a multiplicity of communication forms—moral, ethical, pragmatic, and negotiative—all of which contribute to the deliberative process (TENÓRIO, 2005).

Moreover, Cançado *et al*. (2015) highlight emancipation as one of the theoretical categories of *Gestão Social*. According to Tenório and Araújo (2021), emancipation must be pursued by identifying the contradictions of strategic management, grounded in the enlightenment principles of modernity. Following Habermas, it is posited that individuals cannot achieve freedom unless everyone is free, based on the notion of self-interest properly understood. This concept initially derives from Tocqueville (1987) and has been further developed by Cançado, Silva Jr, and Cançado (2017), as well as Rodrigues, Cançado, and Pinheiro (2020). In this new perspective, emancipation is linked to self-interest properly understood within the public sphere. From a Freirean standpoint, the

process of emancipation and the construction of a participatory society occur simultaneously, with dialogical practices solidifying as they unfold (CANÇADO, SILVA JR; CANÇADO, 2017; TENÓRIO & ARAÚJO, 2021; TENÓRIO & TEIXEIRA, 2021).

Further, self-interest properly understood enables individuals to recognize the dynamics of their agency in constructing the public sphere. The public sphere is the arena where *Gestão Social* is developed; it serves as an intermediary category in the *Gestão Social* process, representing both the space and the essential condition for its growth. This self-interest is linked to emancipation, which, in turn, feeds back into the public sphere, shifting the focus from individual benefit to the collective purpose of the public realm (CANÇADO, 2013; MENDONÇA *et al*., 2012; CANÇADO, SILVA JR; CANÇADO; RODRIGUES; CANÇADO; PINHEIRO, 2020).

Moreover, participation in *Gestão Social* emerges as a crucial category, as it seeks to establish a more participative and dialogical management approach, where decisions are made collectively. In this regard, Paula (2005) notes that societal public administration, as part of the *Gestão Social* perspective, manifests in alternative experiences such as Management Councils and Participatory Budgeting (TENÓRIO, 1998; PAULA, 2005).

Participation and citizenship are understood here as the appropriation by individuals of their right to democratically shape their destinies. Since the 1960s in Brazil, social movements have aimed to enhance social participation and rethink Brazilian development through the lens of a new State management model that ensures public involvement in generating management experiences aligned with the genuine demands of the populace. Consequently, *Gestão Social* offers a societal alternative to technical and bureaucratic management, facilitating participation through a decision-making process that involves multiple social actors (TENÓRIO, 2005; PAULA, 2005).

Additionally, *Gestão Social* is perceived as a theoretical concept characterized by plurality, hybridity, and cooperativeness. Within this framework, the actions of managing, emancipating, participating, and sharing take precedence. Over the years, discussions have encompassed citizenship territories, inter-organizational dynamics, and public administration. According to Paula Aguiar-Barbosa and Chim-Miki, the concept of *Gestão Social*, as derived from the consensus among various authors, encompasses

participatory management in public-private spaces aimed at achieving emancipation (DE PAULA AGUIAR-BARBOSA & CHIM-MIKI, 2020).

Considering the national context, the 1988 Constitution, known as the "Citizen's Constitution," facilitates collective decision-making processes directly involving citizens. *Gestão Social* emerged and developed in this framework as a counterpoint to Strategic Management, reversing the traditional dichotomies of State-Society and Capital-Work to Society-State and Work-Capital. From the first government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva onward, Tenório and Teixeira (2021) argue that *Gestão Social* has been operationalized through public policies such as Participatory Budgets. It gained further support during Dilma Rousseff's administration with Decree 8.234/2014, which established the National Policy for Social Participation (TENÓRIO & TEIXEIRA, 2021).

From 2016 to 2021, there was a noticeable reduction in opportunities for participation, exemplified by the publication of Decree-Law 9.759/2019, which dissolved approximately 700 councils, committees, commissions, groups, and other forms of collegial bodies. However, in this context, Tenório and Araújo (2021) reaffirm the concept of *Gestão Social* articulated by Tenório in 1998. They argue that *Gestão Social* "tries to replace technobureaucratic, monological management with participatory, dialogic management in which the decision-making process is exercised through different social subjects"[7] (TENÓRIO, 1998, p. 16).

Finally, the concept of *Gestão Social* used in this work, following the perspective of Cançado *et al*. (2022), can also be considered an original Brazilian perspective within the English-language discourse. Marinho (2024) identified thirty-one papers that contained either the term "Social Management" or "Social Administration." Upon analysis, these papers were categorized into five groups: **Closer to the Brazilian Perspective, Government Control Over Society, Government Control Over Society Coming Closer to the Brazilian Perspective, Management of Social Public Policies**, and **Others**. However, none of these categories fully align with the perspective of Cançado *et al*. (2022). The following section discusses Information and Communication Technologies and their applications for social participation and democracy.

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[7] Translated by the author

2.2. Icts, Artificial Intelligence (IA) and Digital Democracy

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) encompass a range of technological resources that facilitate the access to and distribution of information. They can be categorized into three main fields: the processing, storage, and retrieval of information via digital devices (like computers and smartphones); the control and automation of machines, tools, and processes; and the communication aspect, which involves the transmission and circulation of information (FARIAS, 2013; PONTE, 2000).

The application of ICTs in public administration began in the 1960s, initially focusing on routine tasks such as payroll and accounting. However, since the 1990s, their use has expanded significantly, driven by the demand for increased transparency, accountability, efficiency, corruption prevention, and the promotion of new forms of public engagement. By making data accessible, ICTs empower citizens to monitor government actions (AE CHUN *et al*., 2012; CARLO BERTOT *et al*., 2012; TOMKOVA, 2009).

Public administration has faced the challenge of reinventing its strategies in light of recent technological advancements and social transformations, with ICTs emerging as vital allies in this endeavor (DE CARVALHO *et al*., 2019). These technologies have enabled the creation of participatory experiences through electronic means, often referred to as e-Participation. This form of engagement can take various shapes, including sharing political messages via email and social networks, conducting e-consultations, and initiating online petitions (PANOPOULOU *et al*., 2009; MARTIN, 2014; TOMKOVA, 2009).

Initiatives that facilitate government collaboration with the public through ICTs are known as e-government. Within this framework, ICTs provide marginalized individuals and groups with a platform to voice their opinions and participate in decision-making processes. Public institutions increasingly advocate for the use of ICTs to enhance citizen engagement and respond to emerging demands for transparency, openness, and legitimacy (SOON AE CHUN *et al*., 2012; MILAKOVICH, 2010; PANAGIOTOPOULOS, 2012).

The advancement of ICTs and e-participation has significantly increased the potential for greater transparency and accountability in government actions. However, it is crucial to recognize the diversity of e-participation types, given the variety of available tools (ÅSTRÖM, 2012). One noteworthy method is crowdsourcing, which solicits input from a large number of citizens, primarily through web technologies. In this approach, a problem is presented to the public, who then contribute solutions, thereby engaging a broad and diverse audience (CHARALABIDIS, 2014; MCNUTT, 2014).

Other methods such as co-production, social voting, wikis, and social networking—utilizing platforms like Facebook and Twitter—have also gained popularity for engaging individuals in social activities. These online tools foster more effective discussion and collaboration, reflecting a growing preference for digital interaction in participatory processes (MCNUTT, 2014).

Bertot *et al.* (2010) define social media as encompassing both the tools and technologies that enable interaction and the content generated through these platforms. This includes blogs, wikis, social networking sites, microblogging, and multimedia sharing services, often utilized for crowdsourcing. Social media is inherently collaborative and participatory, allowing users to socialize, share information, and express themselves freely. It empowers individuals by providing a platform for self-expression, especially when other communication channels may be insufficient (BERTOT *et al.*, 2010).

The significant growth of ICTs in public institutions since the 1990s has been driven by various objectives: increasing transparency, enhancing accountability, improving efficiency, combating corruption, and fostering new forms of public engagement (AE CHUN *et al.*, 2012; CARLO BERTOT *et al.*, 2012; TOMKOVA, 2009).

In democratic contexts, participation at local, state, or national levels is essential for establishing true participatory democracy. Public participation enables citizens to engage in deliberations and decision-making processes, reflecting the real needs and issues of society, thus empowering them (MILAKOVICH, 2010; PANOPOULOU, 2009).

Furthermore, transparency and accountability are crucial for enhancing citizen empowerment. For individuals to effectively assess and validate government actions,

information must be readily accessible. Continuous public engagement is a fundamental pillar of good governance (HARRISON, 2014). Citizens should not only be consulted sporadically but must have ongoing opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and monitor government actions and outcomes.

Social media primarily features content created by the public rather than professionals, which enhances its potential for e-participation. In a democratic context, well-informed citizens and open spaces for debate are essential. New technologies have empowered individuals to organize, voice opinions, and influence political change, as exemplified by the "Arab Spring" of 2011, where social media played a pivotal role. The rise of mobile devices and mobile internet has further amplified the impact of social media, presenting challenges for governments and organizations as they seek to navigate and manage this evolving landscape (MAGRO, 2012; CARLO BERTOT *et al*., 2012; EFFING *et al*., 2011; ALCOFORADO, 2024)

Furthermore, the public sector and various organizations are increasingly embracing social media to enhance engagement, transparency, and accountability by disseminating valuable information and fostering mass collaboration. Opportunities for participation, such as crowdsourcing and co-production, can be effectively facilitated through social media platforms or, in some cases, via intranet systems designed for internal communication with employees (ZAVATTARO, 2013; KHAN *et al*., 2014).

However, new technologies also introduce significant challenges. For instance, while the airplane was designed to enhance transportation, it has been repurposed as a war weapon. In the digital context, especially on social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, companies exert control over content through algorithms that regulate speech in ways that align with their interests. These platforms have exacerbated social tensions and polarization by facilitating the spread of fake news and extremist rhetoric, which can influence elections. For example, leading up to the January 8, 2023, attack on Brazil's government headquarters, misinformation circulated on social media that undermined trust in the electoral process and falsely suggested the military could seize power. Despite claims of being against harmful content, the measures taken to address these issues remain relatively modest. Additionally, the rapid

proliferation of deepfakes[8] on social media has raised serious concerns, contributing to problems such as revenge porn and financial fraud. Legal frameworks to combat deepfakes are still in their infancy. Brazil already has Law 12.965[9], from April 23, 2014 which concerns the principles, guarantees, rights, and duties for the use of internet in Brazil and also Law Project 2338[10] from 2023 which concerns the use of Artificial intelligence, however the later has not been voted yet (AYTAC, 2024; FRANKS, 2021; PAINTER, 2023).

Moreover, as digital media grapples with these challenges, it is crucial to develop new tools that align with democratic values. The potential of digital media to foster deliberation extends beyond mere online voting, highlighting the need for platforms designed to facilitate democratic deliberative practices. Public service media, defined as state-enabled independent organizations that do not rely on advertising or profit motives, can serve as a type of "slow media." Such platforms provide content and services that contribute to democratic development. An example of this is Club 2.0, a public service internet platform. Abandoning digital technologies, despite their potential and visibility, poses significant risks (GROSSI, 2024; AYTAC, 2024; FUCHS, 2021).

Digital technologies have empowered citizens to become content creators, enabling them to mobilize and organize in novel ways, thereby transforming communication dynamics (KNEUR, 2016; GAUJA, 2021). Furthermore, these technologies can enhance traditional offline engagement methods by allowing communication anytime and anywhere, whether synchronously or asynchronously. This promotes accessibility on an international scale and improves transparency through the availability of documents and live-streaming content (SIMON, 2017; FRANKS, 2021; GROSSI, 2024).

Furthermore, state regulation is inadequate and struggles to keep pace with the rapid evolution of digital technologies. Laws governing political participation on the internet, particularly on social media platforms, remain either absent or ineffective. Consequently, the proliferation of fake news, misinformation, and hate speech poses a significant threat to democracy, often bolstering far-right politicians. Moreover, a study from OECD (2024)

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[8] Deepfake refers to video and/or audio content created or manipulated using digital technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), where recognizable individuals appear to say or do things they did not actually say or do (PAINTER, 2023)
[9] https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2014/lei/l12965.htm
[10] https://www25.senado.leg.br/web/atividade/materias/-/materia/157233

indicates that approximately half of adults within the studied countries were unable to identify the veracity of online content. Uninformed citizens may contribute to poor decision-making and hinder productive discourse. (GAUJA, 2021; FRANKS, 2021; FUCHS, 2021; PAINTER, 2024; OECD, 2024).

Recently X, formerly known as Twitter, has been banned in Brazil after failing to comply with a Supreme Court order to appoint a new legal representative. Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who heads the court, enforced the platform's suspension and imposed fines for non-compliance. The conflict traces back to April, when the court ordered the suspension of several accounts accused of spreading disinformation, many of which were tied to supporters of former president Jair Bolsonaro (SANTOS, 2024).

Elon Musk, the owner of X, condemned the decision, accusing Justice Moraes of political bias and violating free speech. Despite the platform closing its Brazil office and resisting legal orders, Moraes has urged tech giants like Apple and Google to remove the app from their stores and cautioned that users attempting to access X via VPNs[11] could face penalties. This dispute is part of a larger investigation led by Justice Moraes into Bolsonaro's supporters and their involvement in an alleged coup attempt. The European Union also have been facing problems with the platform, vice president Vera Jourova declared that Musk's company is the one with the higher rate of disinformation posts, later in December 2023 the EU announce the beginning of a formal investigation against the X.[12] Other social media platforms, such as Telegram and WhatsApp, have faced similar legal challenges in Brazil (SANTOS, 2024; CHADE, 2024).

The impact of digital media on democracies remains contentious, with conflicting outcomes regarding whether it is ultimately beneficial or harmful. Technologies can be wielded for both good and ill, making digital media a double-edged sword that can empower citizens while simultaneously inciting hate speech and polarization. Different types of governments, varying in their democratic nature, express concern over the implications of digital media. To mitigate these challenges, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), particularly natural language processing (NLP), provide promising solutions for interpreting and managing vast amounts of information, aiding in the

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[11] VPN stands for Virtual Private Network, which can be used to encrypt data and mask the user's IP address to create a secure connection.

[12] https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/jamil-chade/2024/04/08/europa-abriu-inquerito-e-chamou-x-de-maior-disseminador-de-desinformacao.htm

navigation of the digital information landscape. Arana-Catania *et al*. (2021) detail a project employing NLP and machine learning to address these issues. Their findings indicate that these tools enhanced citizen participation by improving the categorization of proposals, summarizing texts, and identifying users with similar interests, thereby enriching the digital participation process (LORENZ-SPREEN, 2023; PAINTER, 2024; ARANA-CATANIA *et al*., 2021).

Moreover, digital technologies, especially AI, can foster connections among larger groups, thereby enhancing deliberation. AI is also transforming how the public accesses news, with search engines utilizing large language models (LLMs) to generate content and classify user-generated material to combat harmful speech and misinformation. However, AI's predictive capabilities raise concerns about diminishing individual informational autonomy and reinforcing existing biases. Rather than striving for universal engagement in a singular discussion, we should consider alternative models, such as allowing diverse individuals to address various facets of a shared issue or utilizing multiple randomly selected deliberative assemblies to expose members to a range of perspectives. Habermas proposes a two-track public sphere: one regulated by formal deliberation, which happens in formal political institutions like Parliament, Courts and administrative agencies and another which corresponds to the space of the larger society that allows diverse ideas to flourish. While the ideal of mass deliberation involving everyone simultaneously may be unattainable, we can aim for large-scale synchronous deliberation (LANDEMORE, 2022; JUNGHERR, 2023).

When used effectively, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can significantly enhance transparency and reduce corruption by improving the relationship between government and citizens. In e-government initiatives, these technologies facilitate the widespread dissemination of information. However, in authoritarian regimes, ICTs can also be weaponized to manipulate information, creating an uncontrolled flow that can incite opposition and threaten the stability of such regimes. Information serves as a crucial ally for citizens, and participation in democratic processes is a right established in Brazil following its dictatorship, as guaranteed by Article 5 of the Federal Constitution of 1988[13].

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[13] Besides that, the aim of this project is not to discuss constitutional articles itself but the Irish Convention the Constitution international experience of social participation in constructing a constitutional reform

Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) can play a pivotal role in enhancing deliberative democracy by serving as a moderator, providing real-time translation, offering accurate information, and organizing participants' contributions. Despite these capabilities, we must move beyond the ideal of fully inclusive deliberation in favor of models where either self-selected participants engage through AI-augmented platforms or significant portions of the population deliberate in rotating mini-publics (BERTOT *et al*., 2010; ÅSTRÖM, 2012; HARRISON; SAYOGO, 2014; DE CARVALHO *et al*., 2019; LANDEMORE, 2022).

Some positive and negative aspects concerning the use of IA are summarized in the following chart:

Chart 05 – Use of AI in Democracy

Use of AI in democracy	
Positive Aspects	**Negative Aspects**
Chatbots and virtual assistants powered by AI can efficiently respond to citizen inquiries, provide crucial information, and streamline communication with government officials.	AI may exacerbate polarization and deepen societal divisions by amplifying conflicting viewpoints
Interactive online platforms and forums foster public engagement by enabling citizens to discuss, share ideas, and collaborate on problem-solving	Trust in democratic institutions and processes can be undermined if AI systems are perceived as biased or unaccountable
AI can tailor information delivery and recommendations to individuals, ensuring that citizens receive updates on issues relevant to their interests	Dissenting voices could be suppressed through algorithmic control, threatening freedom of expression
By analyzing public opinion and predicting outcomes, AI can support evidence-based policymaking, leading to more informed decisions	AI-driven decision-making risks excluding marginalized groups, leading to unfair political representation
AI has the potential to enhance public deliberation by facilitating structured discussions, identifying consensus and points of disagreement, and fostering informed compromise	Perceived biases or unfairness in AI systems can erode public trust and undermine the legitimacy of democratic processes
AI-powered systems for monitoring government activities can increase transparency and hold officials accountable, ensuring a more open and trustworthy decision-making process	Vulnerable communities may face increased marginalization as AI systems reinforce existing inequalities
	AI technologies can infringe on individual privacy and civil liberties, especially if not regulated properly
	There is a danger of increased government surveillance and control, as AI makes it easier to monitor citizens
	The lack of transparency and accountability in the use of personal data by political actors can further erode public confidence

Source: Adapted from Sharma (2024)

Also, some countries are on the verge of finalizing a groundbreaking global agreement to establish ethical standards and human rights protections for Artificial Intelligence (AI)

while also regulating digital platforms. After four years of negotiations, all 193 UN member states are expected to endorse this historic pact, which will introduce an international body to oversee AI development and foster global dialogue on AI governance. Officially set to be announced on September 22, the agreement includes provisions aimed at enhancing transparency, ensuring accountability for digital platforms, combating misinformation, and promoting digital literacy (CHADE, 2024).

Governments will hold tech companies accountable for content moderation and the management of personal data, while ensuring AI development is equitable, with a focus on sustainability and human rights. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is anticipated to take a leading role in the discussions, advocating for international collaboration to mitigate the risks associated with AI and addressing the role digital platforms play in spreading extremism. This agreement represents a major milestone in regulating AI and Big Tech, as governments seek to regain control over the democratic and global stability impacts of these technologies (CHADE, 2024).

Additionally, the next chapter brings a brief Ireland's history background and the Convention the Constitution process.

2.3. **Ireland**

The following map shows Ireland and also Northern Ireland, separated by a red line, and its main cities. Also, on the upper left corner it is possible to see this country highlighted in perspective with the European continent:

Figure 03 – Map of Ireland

Source: ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA (2022b)

Early Ireland consisted of a rural society organized in *tuatha*, which were a type of tribe and had cattle as central to its economy, being the main unit for value and exchange. They also possessed a well-established system of law that was based on the idea of honor-price, which could be used to pay for insults, injury, or murder (WILSON, 2004).

Later, up to the 12th, before the Norman invasion in 1169, the Irish were accustomed to the role of colonizers, having performed incursions into England from Irish tribes and also from Vikings who were based there. More than a century after the Norman

Conquest of England, Henry II of England sought to assert control over Ireland. He established dominion over a small area around Dublin known as the Pale (DARBY, 1995).

By the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, military conquests had solidified English rule over most of Ireland, with the notable exception of the northern province of Ulster. The subsequent two centuries deepened the divisions within Irish society, characterized by numerous uprisings. After the 16th century, more efforts were made by the English to subdue the entire island. In 1602, many Irish nobles had to flee to France and Spain; this event was known as 'The Flight of the Earls.' The Dublin-based institutions of government—an Irish monarchy, parliament, and administration—employed a series of penal laws against Catholics and, to a lesser extent, Presbyterians. In 1801, to gain more direct control over Irish affairs, the Irish parliament and government were abolished by an Act of Union, transferring their responsibilities to Westminster. The British and Irish crowns were unified, and the Irish Parliament was dissolved (DALY, 2018; DARBY, 1995).

During British rule over Ireland, between 1845 and 1849, the country experienced a period known as the Great Famine, which reduced the population from 8 million to 6 million people. Furthermore, in 1916, a group of revolutionaries proclaimed independence, not only from Britain but also seeking social justice. The events between 1885 and 1921 established the foundations of political parties and divisions in Northern Ireland (DALY, 2018; DARBY, 1995).

Modern Irish republicanism can be traced to the United Irish Society of the 1790s, an organization committed to establishing a unified and independent Ireland. Influenced by the revolutionary ideals of the French Revolution, the United Irishmen initially sought political reform but evolved into a revolutionary movement. This transformation was driven by longstanding grievances, including widespread land dispossession and the discriminatory Penal Laws, which fostered resentment among the Catholic population. Conversely, the Protestant minority elite, fearing a resurgence of Catholic power, contributed to the intensification of sectarian divisions (ELLIOTT, 1978).

The Defenders, a Catholic agrarian organization originating in Ulster, resisted Protestant hegemony and aligned traditional Catholic objectives with the revolutionary ideals emanating from France. The United Irishmen, a Protestant-led movement, advocated for Catholic emancipation and Irish independence. Over time, the alliance between the Defenders and the United Irishmen reshaped the movement's character,

embedding sectarianism into the broader trajectory of Irish republicanism (ELLIOTT, 1978).

Prior to 1917, the Irish Volunteers were neither a mass movement nor an underground revolutionary organization. Following their split from the Irish Party in 1914 over the issue of service in the British Army, the Volunteers expanded gradually, receiving limited attention until the Easter Rising of 1916. This insurrection marked a critical juncture, as the Volunteers evolved into the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The IRA, part of a wider phenomenon of martial voluntarism in Ireland between 1912 and 1922, sought to achieve complete independence from British rule. Drawing on organizational predecessors from the 1840s, the IRA engaged in a guerrilla campaign alongside Sinn Féin between 1918 and 1921 (HART, 1999).

During World War I, an armed uprising occurred in Dublin during Easter week in 1916. The uprising failed, and its leaders were executed, leading to a surge of sympathy for the I.R.A. and its political party, Sinn Féin. In the 1918 election, Sinn Féin effectively replaced the old Irish Parliamentary Party and established its own Irish parliament. The subsequent War of Independence between Britain and the I.R.A. culminated in a treaty and the Government of Ireland Act in 1920. This movement led, in 1921, to a civil war in the southern 26 counties between those who accepted the settlement and those who viewed it as a betrayal. Northern Ireland, a new six-county administration, was created as a demographic compromise. The following period revealed the failures of both society and government to effectively address the significant challenges they faced. The presence of a Protestant unionist majority alongside a Catholic nationalist minority created a complex political landscape. The aspiration for a united independent Ireland, even by force if necessary, persisted, resulting in I.R.A. campaigns during the 1920s, 1940s, and 1950s (DALY, 2018; DARBY, 1995; WALKER, 2007).

By the 1950s, signs emerged that some Catholics were increasingly willing to accept equality within Northern Ireland rather than pursue a united Ireland. The period known as the Troubles (late 1960s–1990s) was marked by intense intercommunal conflict, systemic economic inequalities, and political exclusion. In 1967, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed to advocate for liberal reforms, including the elimination of discrimination in employment and housing, permanent emergency legislation, and electoral reforms. The local administration struggled to manage the escalating civil disorder, prompting the British government to send troops to restore order in 1969. Initially welcomed by the Catholic community, the troops soon became a catalyst

for the revival of the republican movement, leading to the formation of the Provisional I.R.A., which began a campaign of violence against the British Army (DARBY, 1995; BYRNE & MCCULLOCH, 2023).

Since the early 1970s, Northern Ireland has undergone significant changes, yet establishing a stable government with broad community support has proven difficult. The violence stemming from the conflict during this time resulted in over 3,000 deaths. Over the past 35 years, the dominance of the Unionist Party has diminished, and efforts to address discrimination against nationalists have made substantial progress. During the 1990s, various initiatives aimed to foster a peace process among the primary opposing factions (WALKER, 2007).

In the mid-1990s, paramilitary ceasefires were declared, and extensive negotiations culminated in the Belfast Agreement of 1998, which introduced new political arrangements and power-sharing structures for Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement (GFA), signed in 1998, represents a pivotal development in the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict. By establishing a power-sharing framework, the agreement reconciled deeply divided Irish Nationalist and British Unionist communities within a shared governance structure. Although challenges persist, the agreement serves as a paradigmatic example of post-conflict transformation and continues to influence global peace processes (BYRNE & MCCULLOCH, 2023).

The Irish economy can be considered a mixed economy, with several areas under state responsibility, such as rail and road transportation, some television and radio stations, electricity, the peat industry, air transport, and health insurance. Ireland's high-technology sector was one of the key contributors to economic growth in the 1990s, and today the country is one of the leading software developers. After 2001, Ireland also invested in mortgage and construction. Agriculture has been, and continues to be, important to the Irish economy, consisting mainly of pastures for hay, beef cattle, and dairy production. Tourism has been increasing, especially since the 1950s, with the United States and the United Kingdom serving as its main trading partners (BOLAND, 2022).

From the 1990s onwards, Ireland experienced economic growth that lasted until 2008. The Irish reform process began in 2009 after an economic and political crisis prompted the population to engage in democratic innovation. Ireland became a pioneer in associating technology with direct democracy, this process has been employed only twice

up to 2019: from 2012 to 2014 and later from 2016 to 2018 (SUTEU, 2015; FARRELL, 2019; DALY, 2018).

The first reform process began in 2009 after the Parliament debated the need for electoral reform and proposed creating a citizens' assembly in a report. Following this, a group of academics established "We the Citizens," which convened in June 2011. One hundred citizens were randomly selected to participate. The focus of "We the Citizens" was more on how to process the reforms rather than merely debating whether they should be implemented. The movement served as a pilot project to demonstrate to politicians that citizens could actively participate in changing the constitution. From May to June 2011, several regional events were held throughout the country to discuss what citizens envisioned for the future of Ireland (FARRELL, O'MALLEY, SUITER, 2013; SUTEU, 2015; COURANT, 2021).

Furthermore, in 2012, Parliament established a convention composed of one hundred members, 66 of whom would be randomly selected citizens, while the others were politicians and members of the Houses of the *Oireachtas*[14]. These members were organized into tables of eight, with each table having a facilitator and a note-taker. The 66 citizen members were selected by an independent market research company based on social criteria such as sex, age, and education (O'MALLEY, SUITER, 2013; SUTEU, 2015; FARRELL, 2020).

The convention was tasked with creating reports on all listed issues, with the possibility of adding further relevant constitutional amendments if deemed necessary. Among the topics discussed were reducing the voting age, reviewing the electoral system, representation of women in public and political life, and marriage equality. The system adopted was a majority voting system whenever there was a deadlock. The government committed to responding to the reports within four months (O'MALLEY, SUITER, 2013; SUTEU, 2015; FARRELL, 2020; SORIAL, 2023).

The convention can be considered a citizens' assembly or a deliberative mini-public, consisting of people selected randomly to debate and decide on matters of public interest (SORIAL, 2023; SUITER, 2020). The assembly began its meetings on December 1, 2012, and continued until 2014, as its mandate was extended for twelve months. There were seven items listed for discussion, and the convention produced recommendations for all of them. Additionally, citizens who were not part of the 100-member convention

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[14] Oireachtas is, according to Collins Dictionary website, "the parliament of the Republic of Ireland, consisting of the president, he Dáil Éireann, and the Seanad Éireann".

were able to submit proposals on the listed topics. The most controversial topics received more attention, and overall, the convention received thousands of submissions (SUTEU, 2015; FARRELL,2020).

Figure 04: Former Twitter (now X) post inviting citizens for a Public Meeting of the Convention

Source: https://x.com/kencurtin/status/392594562624933888/photo/1
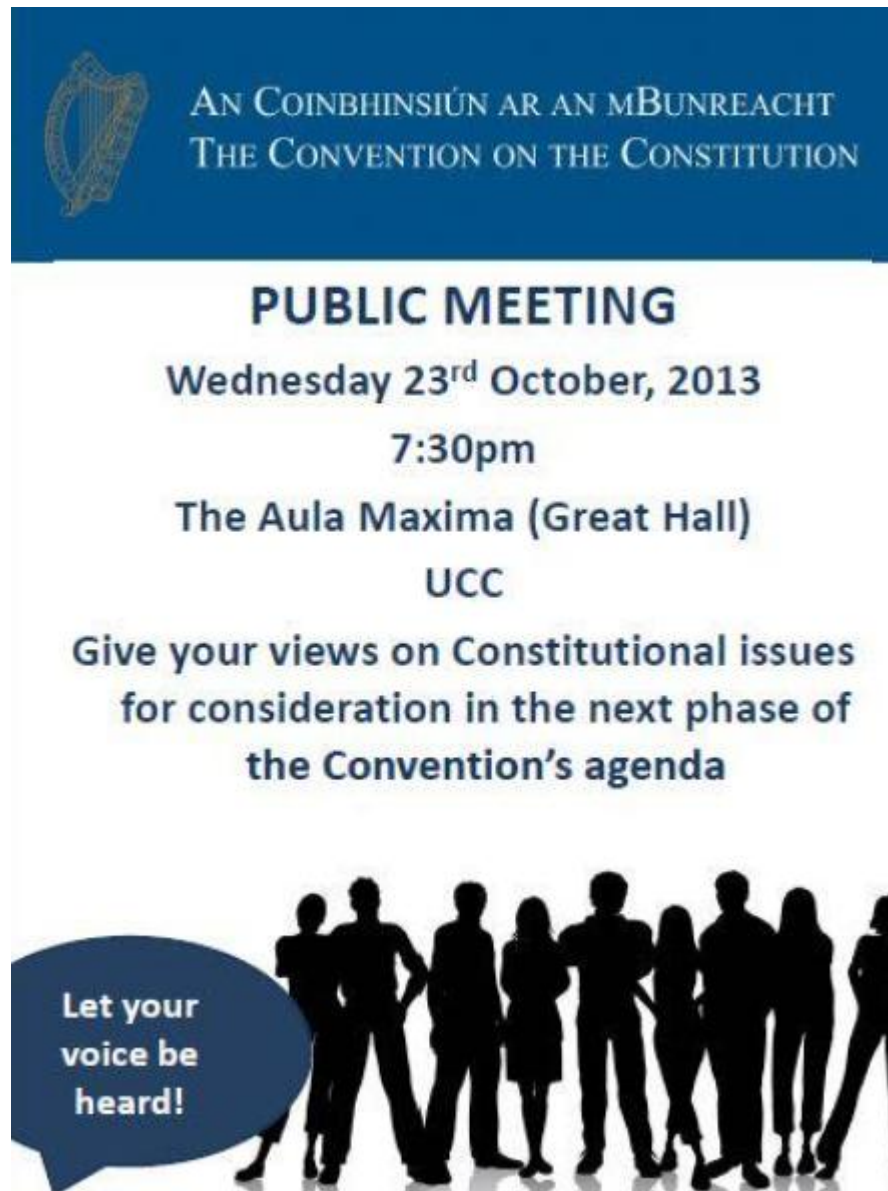
The discussion was conducted by mixing presentations and roundtable discussions, supported by a facilitator. The Convention was promoted on social media

platforms such as Facebook[15], YouTube[16], and Twitter[17] to ensure transparency and inclusiveness. Additionally, documents and reports were made available on its website[18]. Although there was criticism regarding certain aspects, such as the government retaining the final decision on any reform and the limited instruments for direct participation—since this process aimed at reforming parts of the constitution rather than completely redrafting it—it achieved relatively success (SUTEU, 2015; FARRELL, 2020; CAHILLANE, 2020).

Figure 05: Members of the Convention participating in one of the roundtable discussions

Source: https://x.com/ConsConv/status/450586259803889665/photo/1

The Convention on the Constitution was innovative in that it combined politicians and ordinary citizens among its members. A significant portion of its recommendations have been or will be implemented. Notably, same-sex marriage was approved with 79% of the votes; it was later submitted for a referendum and approved in May 2015 by 62% of voters (DOYLE, 2020; FARRELL, 2020).

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[15]https://www.facebook.com/pages/Convention-on-the-Constitution/256049874521851?checkpoint_src=any

[16] https://www.youtube.com/@ConstitutionIe/videos

[17] https://x.com/ConsConv

[18] Originally available at , https://www.constitution.ie/Convention.aspx, archived at https://perma.cc/3A75-PX8Y

Participation is a key element of *Gestão Social*, which focuses on collective decision-making and including diverse voices. The Irish Convention on the Constitution is a good example of how this can be achieved through innovative methods like mini-publics. While it wasn't possible for every citizen to participate directly, the process aimed to represent the population by selecting participants randomly, ensuring they reflected the country's social diversity to some degree.

The Convention relied on informed discussions, where participants debated after hearing presentations from experts. This approach helped make complex topics more accessible and encouraged thoughtful decisions. In many ways, this method aligns with the principles of *Gestão Social*, especially its emphasis on informed, inclusive dialogue. At the same time, it could be further enhanced by incorporating additional methodologies and strategies from *Gestão Social*, such as more opportunities for collective input and transparency.

However, the Convention's process also faced some challenges. For example, questions arise about how experts should be selected to ensure fairness and diverse viewpoints. There's also room to improve how information and participation are handled, especially by using technology. ICTs could help bring more people into the conversation, such as through online platforms that allow citizens to contribute ideas or follow the process in real time. This would not only make participation more inclusive but also align with *Gestão Social*'s goal of making decision-making processes open and accessible to all.

Overall, the Convention on the Constitution offers valuable lessons for participatory governance and shows how it can reflect the principles of *Gestão Social*. By addressing its limitations and exploring new ways to involve more people, including through technology, such initiatives can become even more effective and democratic.

The next chapter describes the methodology used for developing this research.

3. METHODOLOGY

Social sciences frequently work with meanings, motivations, values, and beliefs, which should not be reduced to only quantitative data (BONI; QUARESMA, 2005). Qualitative approaches can be used to properly understand the nature of a social phenomenon, particularly in complex or specific situations. According to Flick (2009), this type of research aims to understand, describe, and sometimes explain these phenomena from multiple perspectives. It seeks to access experiences, interactions, and documents within their natural context to highlight the particularities of the studied material, always considering that the researcher is an important part of the process (RICHARDSON, 2012; FLICK, 2009).

Qualitative observation is pivotal in explaining how social structures work, utilizing techniques such as direct observation or interviews, as well as content analysis of documents or historical analysis. Furthermore, through dialectical logic, which is also present in *Gestão Social*, it is essential to first investigate the historical development of a given phenomenon in order to reveal its specificities and the extent to which it was socially constructed (RICHARDSON, 2012).

Initially, articles and books regarding the definitions of *Gestão Social* were surveyed on the *Periódicos Capes*[19] platform and Google Scholar, considering a time period of ten years from the present, along with their relevance to the field and accessibility. The same procedure was followed for collecting works related to the reform processes in Ireland and direct democratic participation through ICTs published from 2010 to 2024. The search terms are outlined in the following chart.:

Chart 06 – Main Terms searched on *Períodicos Capes* platform

Ireland	ICTs	AI
Ireland Convention on the Constitution	Digital Democracy	Artificial Intelligence and democracy
Irish Convention on the Constitution	E-participation	Artificial Intelligence and participation
Irish Constitutional Reform	E-government	

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[19] The CAPES Journals Portal is a virtual library that gathers and provides Brazilian educational and research institutions with access to the best of international scientific production. https://ajuda.ufrpe.br/article/o-que-e-o-portal-de-periodicos-capes

Ireland Constitutional Reform		
Irish History		
Ireland History		

Source: Elaborated by the author

The quantity of articles found using normal and exact term search is available on Chart 07. The articles were initially selected considering its relevance and also number of citations. Later, the texts related to the Irish Convention on the Constitution were selected if they discussed the procedures adopted during the process or if they presented relevant data. For the articles concerning Irish history it was selected those papers which presented relevant and impactful events on Irish history. Finally, for the others, it was selected those that discussed procedures or definitions of the terms.

Chart 07 – Terms searched and quantity of results found

Term searched	Quantity Found any terms	Quantity Found Exact terms
Ireland Convention on the Constitution	About 28,900	4
Irish Convention on the Constitution	About 25,700	33
Irish Constitutional Reform	About 21,500	26
Ireland Constitutional Reform	About 26,000	8
Irish History	About 17,900	About 18,000
Ireland History	About 121,000	About 3,270
Digital Democracy	About 26,300	About 16,700
E-participation	About 19,000	About 18,000
E-government	About 220,000	About 196,000
Artificial Intelligence and democracy	About 41,400	274
Artificial Intelligence and participation	About 17,900	8

Source: Elaborated by the author

FLICK (2009) emphasizes the importance of transparency in qualitative research, allowing readers to distinguish between direct statements from interviewees and interpretations by the researcher. To achieve reliability, triangulation should be employed, which consists of at least two different methodological approaches to address the same issue (FLICK, 2009).

Furthermore, content analysis will be utilized. This method comprises a collection of methodological instruments based on inference that can be applied to texts. In a quantitative approach, information is derived from the frequency with which certain characteristics of the content appear. In contrast, qualitative analysis considers the presence or absence of a given characteristic of the content (BARDIN, 2009).

Content analysis has three goals: overcoming uncertainty, enriching readings, and going beyond appearances by revealing unspoken content inferred from the presented material. It also serves two functions: the heuristic function, which increases the likelihood of discoveries, and the proof administration function, constituted by questions or temporary assertions to be verified as evidence (BARDIN, 2009).

This method is considered very empirical and aligns well with the type of research as it is viewed as participatory research. According to Henry and Moscovici (1968, apud BARDIN, 2009, p.34), "everything that is said or written can be submitted to content analysis."[20] From a practical perspective, categories are created from the content analyzed and organized into "drawers" that allow the meaningful elements constituting the message to be classified according to various criteria. Then, from the message, the analyst infers knowledge about the sender or the environment (BARDIN, 2009). These categories can be predetermined by the researcher based on theoretical references, or they can emerge during the analysis by identifying recurring themes in the discourse (DUARTE, 2004).

The specificity of content analysis rests on the articulation between the surface of the texts, which are described and analyzed, and the factors that determine these characteristics. In Bardin's words:

> A group of communications analysis techniques seeking to attain through systematic procedures and goals of the description of messages content, indicators (quantitative or not) that allow the inference of knowledge related to the conditions of production/receptions (inferred variables) of these messages (BARDIN, 2009, p.44)[21].

Initially, it was planned to conduct interviews with the 99 members of the Convention on the Constitution. However, the only information available was their names, which made it challenging to establish contact. Efforts to reach the members were largely unsuccessful, as their contact information was not publicly accessible. Only the members who were also politicians had their email addresses available but attempts to

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[20] Translated by the Author.
[21] Translated by the Author.

contact them yielded no responses. Two additional email addresses were identified: one from the official website of the assembly and another obtained directly from David Farrell, a key organizer of the "We the Citizens" project that preceded the Convention. However, no responses were received from either channel.

As a result, all data utilized in this research are secondary or tertiary in nature. These data were derived from other authors' research, such as interviews conducted by David Farrell with Convention members after its conclusion, or they were interpreted from discussions presented in academic articles. Subsequently, all collected data were analyzed and synthesized into a chart that examines the Irish constitutional reform process of 2012 through the lens of *Gestão Social* and social participation. The chart serves to summarize and present the findings of this study in a more structured and accessible manner.

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4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Ireland Convention on the Constitution and *Gestão Social*

The Convention on the Constitution served as a mixed-member deliberative forum that brought together both citizens and members of parliament, fostering a unique blend of expertise and grassroots input. While it faced its share of criticisms, the overall academic commentary has largely been favorable, particularly highlighting the same-sex marriage referendum as one of its most notable achievements (Farrell, 2020)

The process utilized mini-publics focused on discussing topics grounded in evidence and fostering respectful dialogue among participants. Such an approach is pivotal in ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered, thereby enhancing the quality of democratic engagement. To promote transparency and public accountability, all meetings were live-streamed on platforms like YouTube and archived online. Documents presented to assembly members and the decisions made during the process were also made publicly accessible, allowing for scrutiny and fostering a culture of openness (Suiter, 2020; Sorial, 2023).

The combination of randomly selecting members, employing mini-publics for democratic deliberation, and ensuring transparency through digital platforms aligns closely with the principles of *Gestão Social*. This innovative approach provides valuable insights and alternatives for enhancing democratic participation and improving the framework of *Gestão Social* itself. By engaging citizens in meaningful ways, the Convention exemplifies how participatory processes can lead to informed decision-making and greater public trust in governance.

According to Tenório (2016b), *Gestão Social* can be understood as the execution of actions wherein various actors within a defined territory collectively assume authority through a collaborative decision-making process. This dynamic is enriched by the interactions of actors connected by cultural, economic, political, and social factors within a specific locality, which can be defined as a territory. Such framework emphasizes the importance of locality in shaping governance and highlights how local contexts influence the effectiveness of participatory mechanisms (Tenório, 2016b).

With a population of around 5 million[22], Ireland hosted a significant participatory constitutional reform process that aligns well with Tenório's concept of territory. The Irish Convention on the Constitution is emblematic of *Gestão Social*, promoting a process that democratically coordinates interactions among diverse actors within a territory while steering clear of being wielded as a tool for political power. This unique initiative offers a practical case study for *Gestão Social* in participatory experiences.

Moreover, participation—a cornerstone of both *Gestão Social* and democratic practice—can only be fully realized through deliberative processes supported by institutional arrangements that encourage interaction among public authorities, civil society, and economic agents (Tenório, 2016b). The constitutional reform process undertaken in Ireland in 2012 exemplifies this deliberative approach, as it engaged various stakeholders in meaningful dialogue, ultimately leading to outcomes that reflected the will and needs of the broader public.

Such participatory frameworks not only enhance the legitimacy of decision-making processes but also empower citizens to play an active role in shaping the policies that affect their lives. By incorporating diverse perspectives and fostering a culture of deliberation, the Irish Convention on the Constitution stands as a testament to the potential of *Gestão Social* to facilitate democratic governance and collective action.

Tenório asserts that participation requires three key attributes to occur:

> 1) The individual who participates must be conscious about his/her acts and to comprehend the process in which he/she is inserted; 2) Participation cannot be forced; and 3) The individual must get involved willingly, without coercion or imposition (TENÓRIO, 2016, p. 79).[23]

The requirements were partially fulfilled during the process. Of the 99 Convention members, 33 were elected politicians, raising uncertainty about whether they all genuinely wanted to participate. The remaining members were randomly selected citizens who reasonably reflected the population in terms of sex, age, region, education, and socio-economic status. Additionally, since the voting during deliberations was conducted secretly, there was no apparent coercion (FARRELL, 2020).

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[22]Source:
https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2023pressreleases/pressstatementcensusofpopulation2022-summaryresults/
[23] Translated by the Author

Cançado *et al*. (2017) present four criteria for classifying participation: it can be direct or indirect, in-person or remote, mandatory or non-mandatory, and synchronous or asynchronous. Considering the members of the Convention, it can be said that participation was direct, as decisions were ultimately made through individual voting. It was in-person, as members gathered to deliberate and decide; non-mandatory, since members were not compelled to accept the invitation to participate; and synchronous, as illustrated in the chart below:

Chart 08: Participation on Irish Convention on the Constitution according to Cançado *et al*. (2017)

Participation – Irish Convention on the Constitution – according to Cançado *et al*. 2017	
Type of participation	Why?
Direct	All of the members voted for the decisions
In-person	Deliberation occurred in-person
Non-mandatory	The members were not forced to join the Convention
Synchronous	Decisions and opinions happened during participation

Source: Elaborated by the author

In the context of *Gestão Social*, decision-making processes are ideally characterized by mutual agreement and the absence of coercion. This democratic approach is exemplified to some extent by the deliberations of the Irish Convention on the Constitution, where decisions were reached through discussions and were finalized via secret ballot. Such methodology emphasizes respect for individual opinions and the importance of collective agreement, fostering a sense of ownership among participants.

Farrell *et al*. (2017) involved a series of semi-structured interviews with nine citizen members during the concluding days of the Convention. The findings revealed that the political representatives did not seek to dominate the discussions; rather, their roles were largely perceived as constructive. This collaborative atmosphere enabled effective deliberation, with approximately 30% of interviewees reporting a shift in their views on various issues by the end of the process (Farrell *et al*., 2020). This adaptability and openness to changing perspectives underscore the power of deliberative democracy in shaping informed and reflective public opinion.

Despite these positive aspects, the overall collaborative nature of the process was somewhat limited. Participation in the drafting and voting stages was restricted solely to members of the Council, which diminished the sense of collective engagement. While the Convention allowed for public submissions, including those made through online platforms, the authority to assess and incorporate these contributions into the discussions rested exclusively with the Convention members. This centralization of decision-making

raises concerns about the inclusiveness of the process, as it may limit broader citizen engagement and ownership (Carolan, 2015; Persson, 2023).

Transparency is another essential requirement for effective *Gestão Social*, encompassing both communication among participants and accountability to the public. In this regard, the Irish Convention on the Constitution exhibited a mixed record of transparency. Meetings were live-streamed, with recordings available on platforms like YouTube, and relevant documents were archived on the Convention's official website. However, initial recruitment practices, overseen by the organization in charge, did not disclose the identities of citizen members. This lack of transparency was compounded by the observation that two members were married and two others were neighbors, which raised questions about the randomness and fairness of the selection process. Additionally, there were concerns about the transparency of the recruitment process for experts who presented to the members, as their selection criteria and backgrounds were not publicly disclosed (CAROLAN, 2015; PERSSON, 2023).

Pluralism and inclusiveness are vital components of effective democratic participation within *Gestão Social* frameworks. In this context, the Irish Convention was recognized for its satisfactory inclusiveness, even regarded as a model for future initiatives. The process employed a random selection of citizen members, grounded in four key social categories: sex, age, social class, and religion. This approach ensured that the representation of participants accurately reflected the demographic proportions of the Irish population, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and relevance of the Convention's deliberations (SORIAL, 2023). Such measures not only promote a diversity of perspectives but also reinforce the importance of inclusivity in the democratic process, ultimately fostering a more equitable and representative governance structure.

Chart 09 – Irish Convention on the Constitution vs *Gestão Social*

Analyzed categories	*Gestão Social*	Irish Convention on The Constitution	Were the requirements met according to *Gestão Social*?
Participation	'Process dialogically coordinated that has as protagonists are all social actors identified in the territory' (TENÓRIO, 2016b, p.62).	Issues were decided by secret ballot; however, the decision-making and drafting of documents were solely the responsibility of the Council members.	While the Council members were engaged, the lack of broader representation diminishes the democratic legitimacy of the process

Transparency	'Necessary condition for the other characteristics, since the decision-making process goes through the understanding, for language using and communication between people the information must be available to all[..]' (CANÇADO *et al.,* 2022, p.130)	Overall, the process was considered very transparent at the time, especially since meetings were live-streamed and documents were archived online. However, some decisions related to logistical aspects of the process were not clearly communicated.	While efforts were made to maintain transparency, the noted shortcomings indicate that the process did not fully meet the standards set by *Gestão Social* principles.
Pluralism and Inclusiveness	Pluralism concerns the representation of diverse actors that participate on the decision-making processes on the local public policies and Inclusiveness considers the communication power of society as a whole, in special, the voice of the ones excluded from the system (TENÓRIO, 2016b).	At the time, it was regarded as a model of inclusiveness due to its consideration of demographic aspects in the member selection process.	The Convention's approach to inclusiveness meet the requirements of *Gestão Social*, allowing for a broader range of perspectives to inform decision-making.

Source: Elaborated by the author

The results from the Irish Convention on the Constitution suggest that the implementation of mini-publics holds significant promise for enhancing collective participation, making them a valuable asset within *Gestão Social*. While the application of mini-publics may not fully align with all theoretical approaches, it offers a flexible model that can be adjusted to markedly improve transparency and participation in decision-making processes. This adaptability is essential for addressing the evolving needs of democratic governance and citizen engagement.

The Irish Convention on the Constitution embodies several core elements of *Gestão Social*, though these elements are present in a somewhat limited manner. As a result, the Convention can be regarded as a deliberative process, facilitating meaningful discussions among diverse stakeholders. One of the most notable outcomes of this process was the successful marriage equality referendum in 2015, which culminated in an overwhelming 79% of voters casting their ballots in favor of the amendment (Persson, 2023). This landmark decision not only highlighted the effectiveness of the deliberative approach but also reflected a significant attitude towards equality and human rights in Ireland.

Despite the challenges and limitations faced during the Convention, the process has served as a pioneering model for social participation in constitutional reform. Its success led to the establishment of a new assembly, which convened from 2016 to 2018. This assembly continued the momentum for democratic engagement by facilitating discussions surrounding the abortion referendum, which was ultimately approved in

2018. The positive outcomes of these initiatives demonstrated the potential of deliberative processes to engage citizens in critical issues affecting their lives.

Following these developments, Ireland saw the convening of the 2020-2021 Assembly, alongside two additional assemblies in 2022. This ongoing commitment to participatory governance illustrates the sustained interest in incorporating citizen voices into policy-making. The latest assembly process, initiated in 2023[24], further emphasizes the ongoing evolution of democratic practices in Ireland, reinforcing the importance of citizen engagement in shaping public policy.

Chart 10 presents a timeline outlining the entire series of processes up to the present day will provide a clear visual representation of these significant milestones, highlighting how each assembly has contributed to the ongoing dialogue and reform efforts within Irish society.

Chart 10 – Irish Citizens' Assemblies from 2013 to 2024

Assembly	Issues Considered/ Being considered
2013 - 2014 Convention on the Constitution	- Reducing the Voting Age and the Presidential Term - Role of Women and Women in Politics - Same Sex Marriage - Electoral Reform - Blasphemy - Amending the Constitution to give citizens resident outside the State the right to vote in Presidential elections - Dáil Reform - Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - Conclusions and Final Recommendations
2016 - 2018 Citizens' Assembly	- Eighth Amendment of the Constitution - How we best respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population - How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change - The manner in which referenda are held - Fixed Term Parliament
2020 - 2021 Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality	- challenge the remaining barriers and social norms and attitudes that facilitate gender discrimination towards girls and boys, women and men; - identify and dismantle economic and salary norms that result in gender inequalities, and reassess the economic value placed on work traditionally held by women; - in particular, seek to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life; - recognize the importance of early years parental care and seek to facilitate greater work-life balance;

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[24] https://citizensassembly.ie/overview-previous-assemblies/

	- examine the social responsibility of care and women and men's co-responsibility for care, especially within the family; and – - scrutinize the structural pay inequalities that result in women being disproportionately represented in low pay sectors.
2022 Dublin Citizens' Assembly	- the strengths and weaknesses of the current model of local government in Dublin; - the potential benefits, risks, challenges and opportunities associated with a directly elected Mayor for Dublin; - what functions could be transferred from central government to regional or local government in Dublin, and how this should be funded; - the appropriate structure for local and regional government, councils and authorities, looking at models in other capital cities (e.g. a single elected Dublin authority with a mayor and no local councils, a two-tier structure like London or Paris with a mayor, regional assembly and local or borough councils, or a mayoral structure like Greater Manchester with a 'super' mayor sitting above the existing local authorities); - the perspectives of the general public, representative groups, advocacy groups, the sitting *Councillors* of the four local authorities, the Dublin *Teachtaí Dála* and Members of the European Parliament, local authority senior officials and staff, experts and policy makers.
2022 Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss	- the international, European, national, regional and local dimensions to the biodiversity emergency; - the threats presented by biodiversity loss and the opportunities to reverse this loss; - the main drivers of biodiversity loss, their impacts and the opportunity of addressing these drivers; - the perspectives of the general public, representative groups, advocacy groups, experts and policy makers on biodiversity loss, and its impact on Ireland; - opportunities to develop greater policy coherence and strategic synergies between biodiversity policy and other policy priorities including, but not limited to, economic development, climate action, sustainable development, agriculture and tourism; - opportunities to promote greater public understanding of, and support for, urgent action in response to the biodiversity emergency; and - opportunities to improve the State's response to the challenge of biodiversity loss, how that response can best be resourced and implemented in a strategic and coordinated manner, and how progress can be measured.
2023 Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use (Ongoing)	- the drivers, prevalence, attitudes and trends in relation to drugs use in Irish society; - the harmful impacts of drugs use on individuals, families, communities and wider society; - best practice in promoting and supporting rehabilitation and recovery from drug addiction; - the lived experience of young people and adults affected by drugs use, as well as their families and communities; - international, European Union, national and local perspectives on drugs use; - the efficacy of current strategic, policy and operational responses to drugs use;

	• international best practice and practical case studies in relation to reducing supply, demand and harm, and increasing resilience, health and well-being; and
	• the opportunities and challenges, in an Irish context, of reforming legislation, strategy, policy and operational responses to drugs use, taking into consideration the implications for the health, criminal justice and education systems.

Source: adapted from: https://citizensassembly.ie/overview-previous-assemblies/

However, it needs to be considered that the context in Ireland, and Europe, in 2024 is distinct of when the Convention on the Constitution took place. Xenophobia has been a persistent issue across Europe, manifesting uniquely in each country while sharing underlying trends of nationalism, exclusion, and societal division. In Ireland, the influx of immigrants amidst a housing crisis has exacerbated tensions, as highlighted in the NCRI report. Far-right narratives like the #IrelandIsFull campaign have fueled online and offline xenophobia, falsely linking immigrants to crime and portraying them as threats to cultural cohesion. This rhetoric has led to real-world violence, including assaults and hate crimes, and further polarized Irish society (MICHAEL, 2020; CRAIG, 2023).

Comparatively, the broader European context shows similar trends. According to the analysis by Diana Georgiana Marinescu, right-wing extremism has gained traction in many EU nations, leveraging crises such as the 2015 migrant influx and the COVID-19 pandemic to amplify exclusionary ideologies. Countries like Spain and Romania exhibit varying intensities of xenophobia and nationalism, shaped by unique historical and cultural factors, yet all contribute to a transnational rise in far-right ideologies. The use of digital platforms has been instrumental in spreading xenophobic narratives across borders (MARINESCU, 2021).

Addressing xenophobia requires coordinated efforts at local, national, and EU levels. Enhanced hate crime reporting systems, as demonstrated by iReport.ie, and educational initiatives aimed at promoting cultural understanding are critical. Tackling structural inequalities that fuel resentment and ensuring inclusive policies can help mitigate the rise of xenophobic sentiments and foster a more united European community (MICHAEL, 2020; CRAIG, 2023; MARINESCU, 2021).

However, back in the context of 2012 to 2014, from the perspective of *Gestão Social*, the Irish Convention on the Constitution can be regarded as a significantly participative and transparent process, with a clear aim to empower Irish citizens. By incorporating

mechanisms that allowed for direct citizen involvement and deliberation on key constitutional issues, the Convention facilitated a platform where diverse voices could be heard, fostering a sense of ownership among participants. This empowerment is essential in enhancing public trust in governance and ensuring that the democratic process reflects the will of the people.

The Convention represents a pivotal experience for the development of *Gestão Social* as a concept, offering valuable insights into how participatory processes can be effectively implemented. Its innovative approach to engaging citizens in deliberation not only highlights the potential for meaningful civic engagement but also serves as a model for other democratic contexts. The lessons learned from the Irish experience can be instrumental in shaping new participatory initiatives.

Moreover, the principles of transparency and accountability demonstrated in the Irish Convention can be applied globally to strengthen democratic processes. By ensuring that citizens have access to information and opportunities to engage in decision-making, governments can foster a more participatory political culture. The Convention's success in achieving significant policy outcomes, such as the marriage equality and abortion referendums, underscores the effectiveness of a well-structured deliberative process in addressing pressing societal issues.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Gestão Social is an emerging theoretical concept originating from Brazil, characterized by an increasing number of scientific meetings and research groups that have proliferated since the 1990s. According to Marinho *et al*. (2024), the Brazilian perspective on *Gestão Social* is distinct, yet Do Carmo (2023) notes that it has not yet gained significant international recognition (Do Marinho *et al*., 2024; Carmo, 2023). As such, efforts to connect this concept with international experiences could play a crucial role in its internationalization. This goal aligns with UFT's Institutional Development Plan for 2021-2025, which emphasizes strategic goal 1.6: the internationalization of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Further on, considering the development of a new social participation methodology, this research is also aligned with Sustainable Development goal 10, Target 10.2: "By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status", Target 10.3:" By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status", also Goal 16, Target 16.6: " Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels", Target 16.7: "Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels" and Target 16.10: "Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements"[25].

An innovative process that warrant attention in this context is the Irish Convention on the Constitution. This process is particularly notable for its inclusiveness and the considerable number of recommendations that were approved and subsequently implemented. In contrast, the Icelandic model stands out for its extensive use of social media to facilitate collaboration among citizens (Suite *et al*., 2015; Farrell *et al*., 2020). By integrating the experiences of both these processes with the core principles of *Gestão Social*—such as promoting participation, public engagement, and social emancipation— there is potential to achieve positive outcomes for society as well as for the advancement of this research concept.

The pilot project proposed here can serve as a foundational step for testing and developing new methodologies in *Gestão Social*. While initially conducted on a smaller

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[25] Available at: https://sdgs.un.org/

scale, this project has the potential to be adapted for broader participation, thus enhancing its impact.

Since its inception, the internet has undergone significant evolution, with social media expanding the channels available for political communication and creating new roles for citizens that go beyond mere spectatorship. This transformation opens up new opportunities for dialogue between representatives and constituents (Kneuer, 2016). However, despite the potential for digital media to foster deliberation, democratization, and active participation, it also presents risks to democracy through phenomena such as hate speech, populism, and the rapid spread of misinformation (Lorenz-Spreen *et al.*, 2023; Grossi *et al.*, 2024; Fischli *et al.*, 2024).

In light of these challenges, there is an urgent need for research focused on developing new methodologies to better understand the complexities of digital media, particularly social media. Like many technologies, the internet embodies an inherent ambiguity, serving as both a constructive tool and, at times, a destructive force. However, when harnessed effectively, it can become a powerful means of political engagement and participation, promoting transparency, accessibility, and supporting deliberative and decision-making processes. This potential can be fully realized if appropriate digital tools and strategies are developed and employed (Isikli, 2015; Grossi *et al.*, 2024).

The ongoing lack of sufficient research funding in Brazil presents significant challenges for many researchers, including myself. Completing this work has relied heavily on articles accessible through *Periódicos Capes*, a free portal for university members, which has also posed challenges during my master's course. While I greatly appreciate this valuable resource, I believe that research could be significantly strengthened with access to a broader array of materials. Unfortunately, without adequate funding, obtaining the necessary resources independently remains a formidable obstacle.

Furthermore, by successfully conducting a pilot project that utilizes UFT's social media platforms and promotes a mini-public composed of academics, administrative staff, and professors across campuses, UFT could pioneer a new era of digital democracy. This initiative has the potential to enhance the university's public image and could pave the way for similar participatory initiatives at other educational institutions. By demonstrating the efficacy of digital engagement strategies, UFT can position itself as a

leader in the movement toward greater civic participation and collaboration in governance.

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APPENDIX 1

Public Participation: Mini publics and social media – Pilot project for the Federal University of Tocantins

Considering both the Irish Convention on the Constitution and the Icelandic Crowdsourced Constitution as innovative processes that, to varying extents, combine technology and direct democracy, both have been analyzed within the scope of *Gestão Social*—this analysis here, and the latter in my dissertation. These processes present interesting procedures that could be enhanced and applied to democratic dialogical processes. By integrating social media to broaden public reach with mini publics to ensure more controlled local debates, and by allowing participation from those without access to or interest in modern technologies, the process could become more inclusive and yield greater results.

Mini publics can enhance deliberation within larger groups, as the selection process often leads people to perceive the members as more similar to or representative of themselves. Additionally, using social media to share information about a deliberative process can reduce misinformation related to the process and reach a more diverse audience, particularly young people (SORIAL, 2023; SUITER, 2020).

The approach involves initially promoting debates on wider topics through social media channels managed by UFT's profiles. These discussions would lay the groundwork for a future, smaller group that would be randomly selected, ensuring representation from various segments of the university community. Voting on these topics could be facilitated via the UFT Intranet or online using institutional email accounts, which would limit each person to one vote and require them to log in with their credentials.

Further on, a selection process, similar to what UFT conducts to select temporary professors, would be used to recruit specialists on the chosen topics, making sure that for each topic at least two specialists from different theoretic views are selected to give support and speeches for the members. The assembly members would then be selected randomly, with the option for individuals to decline participation. Once formed, this group would be responsible for organizing the inputs gathered during the earlier steps.

They would then participate in events across different campuses to engage in debates with the community and gather additional inputs.

The selected specialists would then give speeches on the topics before the members start their deliberation, also giving support whenever necessary, these lessons would be livestreamed on UFTs YouTube channel. Following these discussions, the assembly would deliberate and vote on the proposals in sessions that would be live streamed via UFT's official YouTube channel. To ensure transparency and open access, all documents produced during the process would be posted on UFT's website.

After the deliberation process, the assembly would be responsible for consolidating the decisions into reports, organized by theme. These reports would then be submitted to the appropriate University council based on their areas of responsibility for voting. The university would then be tasked with implementing the approved issues or, in cases of greater complexity, potentially putting them to a vote by the entire academic community. The whole process can be summarized as follows:

Chart 11: Pilot Project Social Media and Mini publics for UFT

Pilot Project – Social Media and Mini publics	
Step	**Procedure**
Initial Debate	By using Social Media, the university would gather topics to be discussed
Specialists Selection	Selection of specialists on the topics to give speeches and support for the assembly
Assembly Selection	Random selection of members until Assembly is formed
Mini publics	Assembly goes to different campuses to debate and gather new inputs
Speeches	Specialists give speeches, livestreamed to the assembly members
Deliberation	Assembly deliberates on the issues and produce reports
University Councils	Reports are submitted to be voted on the councils
Conclusion	The ideas would be executed or first put to be voted for the whole academic community

Source: Elaborated by the author