

Barriers to civic engagement in the metropolitan region of Ribeirão Preto*Barreiras ao engajamento cívico na região metropolitana de Ribeirão Preto**Obstáculos al compromiso cívico en la región metropolitana de Ribeirão Preto*Caroline Kalil Nogueira¹
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Abstract: This work constitutes an investigation into the Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto, currently considered as the "Brazilian Capital of Agribusiness". The paper is divided into three sections which address the Brazilian institutional aspects and their application to the specified region, as well as socioeconomic aspects of regional development. The objective is to demonstrate that there are obstacles to collaborative participation in public administration and also barriers to greater regional integration, given that Ribeirão Preto is both an export base hub and an area of influence in the São Paulo macro-metropolis (São Paulo extended metropolitan complex). The theoretical foundation involved in this study is based on the constitutional norms that guide and determine competence in the scope of political institutions, as well as federal entities. In addition, a spatial approach was chosen within Economic Geography, converging to the issue of civic participation in Brazil, both in legal and socio-political aspects, considering historical and cultural elements, according to the studies of historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. Despite the introductory nature of this work, its importance lies in identifying socio-political boundaries and barriers to economic development, since public policies aimed to this end in Brazil have proven to be punctual and ineffective for the solution of asymmetries and the improvement of the quality of life of the population.

Keywords: Brazil; public administration; agribusiness; regional integration.

Resumo: Este trabalho constitui uma investigação da Região Metropolitana de Ribeirão Preto, atualmente considerada a "Capital Brasileira do Agronegócio". O artigo está dividido em três seções que abordam os aspectos institucionais brasileiros e sua aplicação à região especificada, bem como aspectos socioeconômicos do desenvolvimento regional. O objetivo é demonstrar que existem obstáculos para a participação colaborativa na administração pública e também barreiras

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para uma maior integração regional, uma vez que Ribeirão Preto é um polo de exportação e uma área de influência na macrometrópole paulistana. A fundamentação teórica envolvida neste estudo baseia-se nas normas constitucionais que orientam e determinam a competência no âmbito das instituições políticas, bem como das entidades federais. Além disso, optou-se por uma abordagem espacial dentro da Geografia Econômica, convergindo para a questão da participação cívica no Brasil, tanto nos aspectos legais quanto sociopolíticos, considerando elementos históricos e culturais, segundo os estudos do historiador Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. Apesar do caráter introdutório deste trabalho, sua importância está na identificação de limites sócio-políticos e barreiras ao desenvolvimento econômico, uma vez que políticas públicas voltadas para esse fim no Brasil têm se mostrado pontuais e ineficazes para a solução de assimetrias e para a melhoria da qualidade de vida da população.

Palavras-chave: Brasil; administração pública; agronegócio; integração regional.

Resumen: Este trabajo constituye una investigación de la Región Metropolitana de Ribeirão Preto, actualmente considerada la "Capital Brasileña del Agronegocio". El artículo está dividido en tres secciones que abordan los aspectos institucionales brasileños y su aplicación a la región especificada, así como aspectos socioeconómicos del desarrollo regional. El objetivo es demostrar que existen obstáculos para la participación colaborativa en la administración pública y también barreras para una mayor integración regional, ya que Ribeirão Preto es un polo de exportación y un área de influencia en la macrometrópolis "paulistana". La fundamentación teórica involucrada en este estudio se basa en las normas constitucionales que orientan y determinan la competencia en el ámbito de las instituciones políticas, así como de las entidades federales. Además, se optó por un enfoque espacial dentro de la Geografía Económica, convergiendo para la cuestión de la participación cívica en Brasil, tanto en los aspectos legales y sociopolíticos, considerando elementos históricos y culturales, según los estudios del historiador Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. A pesar del carácter introductorio de este trabajo, su importancia está en la identificación de límites socio-políticos y barreras al desarrollo económico, ya que políticas públicas orientadas a ese fin en Brasil se han mostrado puntuales e ineficaces para la solución de asimetrías y para la mejora de la calidad de vida de la población.

Palabras clave: Brasil; administración pública; agronegocios; integración regional.

1. Introduction

This work is the product of a study carried out during the course of Collaborative Public Administration, taught by Prof. Dr. Jack Meek at the University of La Verne in 2017. The issues presented seek to provide an overview of institutional characteristics as well as forms of collaborative governance in the Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto.

This paper is divided into three sections, the first of which deals with the theoretical considerations that served as a basis for understanding the functioning of democratic institutions and the management mechanisms of public administration in the selected region. The second section deals with aspects of the Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto, as well as its historic and economic importance. The third section deals with civic engagement in the region, bringing constitutional, social and cultural aspects that make it ineffective for citizen participation in a collaborative way. It's important to note that all the quotes from Brazilian authors were translated to English to enable greater comprehension.

The paper does not aim to exhaust the subject, however it is presented as a panoramic and introductory study of several important aspects for the regional development in the metropolitan region of Ribeirão Preto, as well as for the national megapolis of São Paulo and its areas of influence.

Given that Brazil is a commodity exporter, this work, even if introductory, is extremely important to understand the socioeconomic barriers that constitute impediments to development in one of the richest regions of the country. The contrasts in terms of the quality of life and income distribution are extreme, especially due to the lack of business diversification and public planning, in order to create market conditions for regional development based on start-up initiatives. This is aggravated by the limits imposed by the rulers themselves in regard to popular participation. Limits that, as was presented throughout this work, involve constitutional devices and patrimonialism political practices.

2. Theoretical considerations

2.1 The area

The area of the material covered in this paper is the Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto. It is located at the northeast of the state of São Paulo, and was chosen because of its importance in one of the predominant economic activities in Brazil: agribusiness.

According to EMPLASA³ (2016, translated by the author):

It is the first outside the limits of the so-called Macrometropolis Paulista and is strategically located in relation to the São Paulo and Campinas MRs, through the Anhanguera Highway, and to the Port of Santos, by Imigrantes. The road axis in the North direction guarantees access to the Federal District and the Triângulo Mineiro. This territory is also cut by a railway line in concession to América Latina Logística (ALL).

The region was institutionalized as a Metropolitan Region by complementary law in the State of São Paulo, sanctioned by Governor Geraldo Alckmin in 2016 as *Lei Complementar nº 1.290, de 6 de julho de 2016*. Before this event, the state had the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo competing with the Metropolitan Region of Campinas. Despite the fact that all of those regions are located in the same State of the Brazilian Federation, they are not necessarily connected. Indeed, they usually are not connected to each other from the perspective of public administration, composing independent units.

The cities which are part of the Metropolitan Regions, in general, also have autonomous administration in relation to the metropolitan centers guaranteed by the Federal Constitution:

Article 18. The political-administrative organization of the Federative Republic of Brazil comprises the Union, the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities, all autonomous, under the terms of this Constitution (BRASIL, 2016, translated by the author).

The intervention is described in chapter four, article 35 of the Federal Constitution and may only be carried out under special circumstances, such as issues of debt with the state or the Union, rendering undue accounts, mismanagement of public money or judicial intervention to provide for law enforcement, order or decision taken by the Court of Justice.

These constitutional guarantees ensure full autonomy of the municipal entity, in order to meet local demands. The positive side of this is the self-determination of the municipalities to manage policies according to the needs of the different groups in local areas. On the other hand, this system does not contribute at all to the establishment of participatory approaches in governance. There are many interests to deal with inside the metropolitan regions, ranging from vanity to market share. Moreover, the State of São Paulo is subdivided into administrative regions, which may or may not coincide with the division of mesoregions and microregions within São Paulo state.

³ EMPLASA – Empresa Paulista de Planejamento Metropolitano S/A (Company Paulista of Metropolitan Planning)

3. Economic Geography and Administrative Regions

3.1 The administrative regions in São Paulo state

The Federal Constitution of Brazil determines in its article 25, § 3º:

The states may, by means of complementary law, establish metropolitan regions, urban agglomerations and microregions, constituted by groups of neighboring municipalities, to integrate the organization, planning and execution of public functions of common interest (BRASIL, 2016, translated by the author).

It is important to understand the concept of metropolitan regions, urban agglomerations and microregions adopted by the Brazilian Constitution. According to Henriques Filho *apud* Afonso da Silva (2013, p. 139-140, translated by the author):

A metropolitan region consists of a set of municipalities whose centers are united by defined urban continuity based around a Municipality-polo. Microregions are formed of groups of bordering Municipalities with a certain homogeneity and common administrative problems, whose centers are not units for urban continuity. Urban agglomerations lack conceptualization, but, soon, we can see that these are urban areas, without a pole of urban attraction, or such areas are from the cities of the municipalities, such as in the metropolitan region of Baixada Santista (in São Paulo) or not.

This type of division is important for promoting regional development through the implementation of public policies aimed at reducing regional inequalities within the State or creating incentives to improve areas of economic and social development, such as the Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto. However, government actions within the state government are limited to constitutional prerogatives, ensuring the autonomy of municipal entities, as previously mentioned.

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) uses the same concepts of mesoregion and microregion, however it does so with a focus on social and economic organization, which are not considered merely administrative. In this way, “[...] the concept of space organization refers to the different spatial structures resulting from the dynamics of society on a territorial basis” (IBGE, 1990, p. 7).

The IBGE is responsible for the census and it seeks a regional identity among municipalities. This is important to understand the uneven process of the formation of urban settlements throughout the country. For this reason, the IBGE subdivides the federative entities into mesoregions and microregions, according to the economic and social characteristics found. This classification is purely for the purposes of statistical and geographical studies, since they do not constitute new autonomous administrative units. According to the institute:

A mesoregion is understood as a particular area in a Federation Unit that presents defined forms of geographic space organization defined by the following dimensions: the social process as the determinant, the natural framework as the conditioner and the network of communication and places as an element of spatial articulation. These three dimensions allow areas delimited as mesoregions to have a regional identity. This identity is a reality built up over time by the society residing there. [...]. The microregions were defined as parts of the mesoregions that present specificities regarding the organization of space. [...]. These specificities refer to the structure of agricultural production, industrial, mineral extraction or fishing. [...]. Thus, the production structure for the identification of microregions is considered absolute, consisting of production, distribution, exchange and consumption, including urban and rural activities. As such it expresses the organization of space at the micro or local level (IBGE, 1990, p.8, translated by the author).

The result is that the State of São Paulo is made-up of different divisions, depending on the intended purpose. For administrative purposes, the concept of the metropolitan region is confused with mesoregion according to some Brazilian legal scholars, but obeying different evaluation criteria if compared to the IBGE methodology. In any case, it is important to emphasize that these classifications are complementary and both contribute to the elaboration of public policies, both in the administrative sense, as proposed by the Federal Constitution, and in the sense of social and economic policies, for the improvement of regional asymmetries.

The mesoregion of Ribeirão Preto has 66 municipalities (SANTA ROSA DE VITERBO, online), the Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto, which was defined by complementary law in 2016, has 34 municipalities (EMPLASA, 2016) and the microregion of Ribeirão Preto has 16 municipalities.



MAP 1 – Mesoregion of Ribeirão Preto. Source: Santa Rosa de Viterbo, 2017.

The mesoregion of Ribeirão Preto has 66 municipalities that comprise 7 microregions, namely: Franca, Ituverava, Barretos, Jaboticabal, São Joaquim da Barra, Batatais and Ribeirão Preto.

TABLE 1 – Microregions within the Mesoregion of Ribeirão Preto

MICROREGIONS	MUNICIPALITIES
Franca	Cristais Paulista, Franca, Itirapuã, Jeriquara, Patrocínio Paulista, Pedregulho, Restinga, Ribeirão corrente, Rifaina and São José da Bela Vista.
Ituverava	Aramina, Buritizal, Guará, Igarapava, Ituverava
Barretos	Barretos, Colina, Colômbia
Jaboticabal	Bebedouro, Cândido Rodrigues, Fernando Prestes, Guariba, Jaboticabal, Monte Alto, Monte Azul Paulista, Pirangi, Pitangueiras, Santa Ernestina, Taiaçu, Taiúva, Taquaral, Taquaritinga, Terra Roxa, Viradouro, Vista Alegre do Alto
São Joaquim da Barra	Guaira, Ipuã, Jaborandi, Miguelópolis, Morro Agudo, Nuporanga, Orlandia, Sales Oliveira, São Joaquim da Barra
Batatais	Altinópolis, Batatais, Cajuru, Cássia dos Coqueiros, Santa Cruz da Esperança, Santo Antônio da Alegria
Ribeirão Preto	Barrinha, Brodowski, Cravinhos, Dumont, Guataparã, Jardinópolis, Luís Antônio, Pontal, Pradópolis, Ribeirão Preto, Santa Rita do Passa Quatro, Santa Rita de Viterbo, São Simão, Serra Azul, Serrana, Sertãozinho

Source: SILVEIRA, 2017.



MAP 2 – Microregion of Ribeirão Preto. Source: Santa Rosa de Viterbo, 2017.

factors that are commonly defined by economic geography, such as the concepts of *market area* and *central place*. These terms were introduced by Christaller in 1933 and were also developed by Lösh in 1940.

According to Lemos, Diniz and Guerra (2003, p. 667, translated by the author):

O lugar central, o núcleo urbano original, constitui-se no elemento organizador da curva de oferta e demanda de bens no espaço, que delimita a área de mercado em que ocorre forte intensidade do fluxo de trocas, em uma área geográfica espacialmente delimitada. A extensão da área de mercado é, entretanto, permanentemente restringida pelo atrito espacial da distância, no sentido de que a curva de demanda dos bens no espaço é função inversa do crescimento dos custos totais de transporte. Nesta acepção, este espaço geográfico, caracterizado por fortes relações de trocas internas e fracas relações externas, denomina-se região, em termos estritamente econômicos. A contribuição específica de North (1955), para uma definição mais completa de região, foi a de fornecer elementos teóricos para romper com a natureza de economia fechada, subjacente, da definição original, pela introdução da idéia de base exportadora regional. A partir da exploração de vantagens comparativas, a exportação de bens para localidades fora da área de mercado regional constitui fator decisivo de integração inter-regional e realimentação do crescimento do lugar central, em função de retornos crescentes de escala ou economias de especialização regional. (FUJITA et al., 1999, p. 28). Por sua vez, a expansão da oferta de bens residenciais de baixa transportabilidade, constituídos fundamentalmente pelos serviços, constitui fator decisivo de consolidação da integração intra-regional e desenvolvimento de economias de urbanização. (RICHARDSON, 1973).

From these conjectures it is possible to affirm that the concepts of central place and market area are interrelated, in the sense that companies tend to establish themselves in locations where there is greater possibility of profit maximization. In the same way, consumers tend to move to centers with a greater supply of goods and services. Thus, forming an urban hierarchy in which larger centers are able to supply the services and products that smaller centers of the surroundings are not able to produce. As such, “The theory of the central place, viewed in this aspect, clearly establishes a concept of ‘market area’, to be polarized by the urban center of greater population and the density of services” (LEMOS; DINIZ; GUERRA, 2003, p. 668).

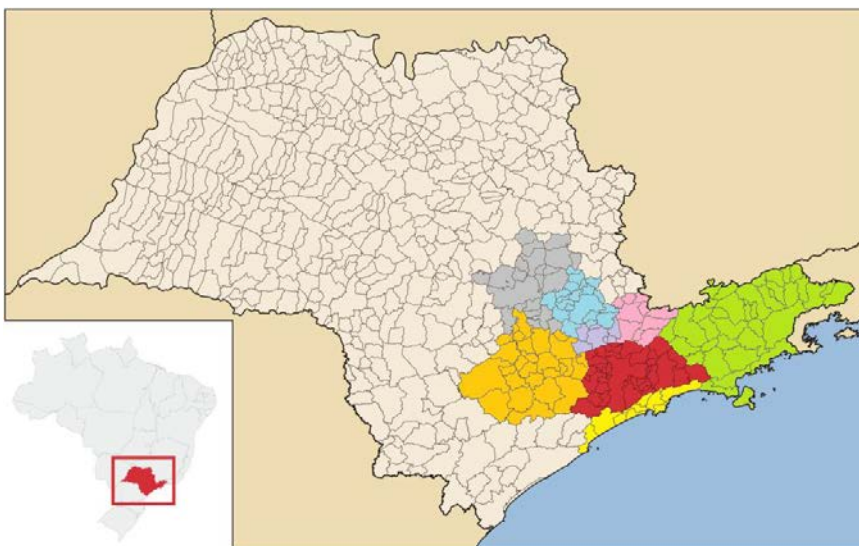
According to the authors, the service sector is the best indicator of the polarization capacity of a central location. In the meantime, the Ribeirão Preto region, since its formation, has been of significant importance in the export of agricultural commodities, in which the entire tertiary sector has developed as a function of agricultural activities in the region, promoting interregional integration. This was favored by the strategic location of the Ribeirão Preto region in relation to the metropolitan regions of Campinas and São Paulo, as well as the Port of Santos. Likewise, it is necessary to consider the proximity to the Triângulo Mineiro region and access to the Federal District through an extensive road network (EMPLASA, 2016).

According to EMPLASA, the Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto is unique in being the only one not included as part of the São Paulo macro-metropolis, “[...] one of the largest urban agglomerations in the Southern Hemisphere. It houses the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (RMSP) - among the six largest in the world, according to the United Nations (UN) -, Baixada Santista, Campinas, Sorocaba, the Vale do Paraíba, North Coast, the urban agglomerations of Jundiaí and Piracicaba, and the Bragantina Regional Unit, not yet institutionalized” (EMPLASA, 2016).

This division can be seen on the following maps:



MAP 4 – Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto. **Source:** ABREU, 2006.



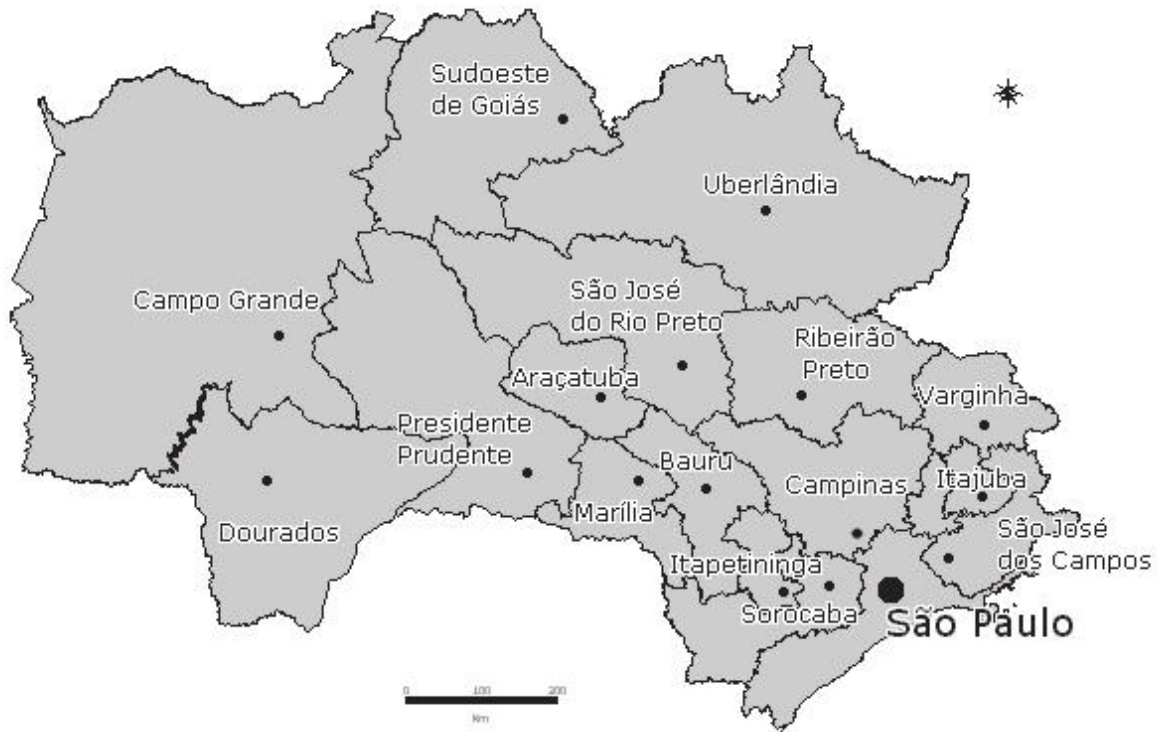
MAP 4 – Macrometropole paulista. **Source:** ABC PAULISTA, 2014.

Of note is that the maps show that the administrative division of the State do not coincide with a division given by economic geography, as all of the above-defined regions, such as Campinas, Sorocaba, Jundiaí, Ribeirão Preto, etc., are areas of influence of the São Paulo state capital. Notwithstanding this influence does not occur only within the limits of the state as demarcated by the government, but through a much larger area than that institutionally recognized.

The area of influence of a given economic pole is determined by the flow of trade and people. In the meantime, "The volume of the income masses of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, compared to others, makes them, undoubtedly, national poles" (LEMOS; DINIZ; GUERRA, 2003, p. 668).



MAP 6 - The Brazilian macropoles and their areas of influence. **Source:** LEMOS; DINIZ; GUERRA, 2003, p. 683



MAP 7 - Mesoregions polarized by São Paulo. **Source:** LEMOS; DINIZ; GUERRA, 2003, p. 683.

The ability of a given economic center, or central-place, to attract mesoregions in an integrated way is what constitutes macro-centers. In this way, São Paulo has an extensive area of influence due to its proximity with industrial and agricultural centers, thus:

It is observed that the proximity of the areas with the highest economic density, characterized as industrial and / or agricultural clusters, concentrated in the Center-South and organized from the dark strip of the national macro-center of São Paulo. The mesoregions, characterized as industrial poles, are concentrated in the contiguous red belt between Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte, which approximately coincides, in its geographic contours, with the industrial polygon identified by Diniz (1993). Along the polygon to the west lies the extensive green belt of the agricultural and cattle ranch poles of the mesoregions of Brazil's south west to the mesoregions of Brazil's Midwest. This group represents the hard-core of Brazilian regional development. The strong productive integration between the agricultural base and industry manifests itself, in general, in the headquarters of the urban pole of the mesoregions classified as which develop the industrial nucleus integrated into the agricultural and livestock base, as exemplified by the cases of areas of influence of São Paulo, including Uberlândia, in the Triângulo Mineiro, São José do Rio Preto, in the Northwest of São Paulo, Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Rondonópolis, in Mato Grosso. In these localities there has been an increase in the productive chain by the agroindustrial development downstream and upstream (LEMOS; DINIZ; GUERRA, 2003, p. 688, translated by the author).

The lack of recognition of this configuration causes socio-economic policies to occur in a disorderly way among the mesoregions, because it is the responsibility of states and the federal government that only recognize the institutionally established regions. More comprehensive regional integration policies that exceeded the boundaries between member states of the federation could increase the effectiveness of development and correct regional asymmetries in the areas of economic macro-influence.

5. The metropolitan region of Ribeirão Preto

The metropolitan region of Ribeirão Preto is located northwest of the capital of São Paulo state, and consists of 34 municipalities divided into four sub-regions. It is currently the country's 18th most populous metropolitan region with around 1,662,645 inhabitants according to IBGE data released by EMPLASA (2016). The GDP is around R\$ 48 billion, making it the 17th highest of the country, representing about 2.98% of the GDP of São Paulo state and 0.98% of the country.

The region has important confluences that have collaborated throughout the history of the region for the development of Ribeirão Preto as well as for surrounding municipalities. It is worth mentioning the proximity and the logistic access to the Triângulo Mineiro region with a view to agribusiness. The quality of infrastructure in transport and communication contribute to the reduction of operational costs for local companies, especially the sugar and ethanol industries, as well as the export sector of agricultural commodities, although these costs are higher than in the competing countries.

Thus, it can be verified that the area of influence of Ribeirão Preto has an even greater reach than the 34 municipalities that constitute the four subregions as determined by the complementary legislation of the State. In addition to being an area of influence in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto is a centrally located economically speaking, attracting a flow of people, goods and services not only from the metropolitan region but also from the adjacent microregions of Franca, São Joaquim da Barra, Ituverava, Jaboticabal, Barretos and Batatais.

6. Brief economic and social history of the region of Ribeirão Preto

The occupation of the mesoregion of Ribeirão Preto began with cattle raising, reaching its peak during the period of expansion and the consolidation of coffee culture in the region

during the nineteenth century. Caio Prado Júnior (1981, pp. 161-162, translated by the author), points out that:

The coffee plantation marks in the economic evolution of Brazil a well characterized period. For three -quarters of a century, almost all of the country's wealth was concentrated; And even in absolute terms it is remarkable: Brazil is the great world producer, with a near monopoly, of a genus that will take the first place among the primary products of international trade. The famous phrase, "Brazil is coffee," declared in parliament under the empire from which it subsequently became widely popular, legitimately corresponded to a reality: both within the country and in the international concept, Brazil was effectively, and only, coffee. Living exclusively from exports, coffee alone counted heavily on the Brazilian economy. For that export, the precious grain has contributed more than 70% of the value.

According to historian Prado Jr. (1981), the success of coffee plantations in Brazil was responsible for three great aristocracies in the country, with great political power in that period, marked by colonialism and by a set of political practices that became known as "coffee with milk", a reference to the concentration of political power in the hands of the great landowners of the States of Minas Gerais and São Paulo who shaped the main decisions of the country.

Fazenda S. Martinho (S. Martinho's Farm), in the region of Ribeirão Preto, had more than three million feet of coffee, making it the largest in the country at that time. Currently, the name S. Martinho still exists in the corporate world, the São Martinho Group, which "[...] is one of the largest sugarcane groups in Brazil, with an approximate crushing capacity of 24 million tons of sugarcane. It has four plants in operation: São Martinho, in Pradópolis, in the region of Ribeirão Preto (SP); Iracema, in Iracemópolis, in the region of Limeira (SP), Santa Cruz, located in Américo Brasiliense (SP) and Boa Vista, in Quirinópolis, 300 kilometers from Goiânia (GO)" (S. MARTINHO, online).

According to the Ribeirão Preto and Region Convention & Visitors Bureau (2017), with the Great Depression of 1929 the coffee culture went into crisis, giving way to other crops, especially sugar cane which was reintroduced in the region. Sugar and alcohol production grew significantly with the implementation of the Pro-Alcohol, a program created by the federal government, sanctioned by president Ernesto Geisel on November 14th by Decree No. 76.593/1975, it aimed to stimulate the addition of anhydrous alcohol in gasoline, capitalizing on both the sugar and alcohol industries.

As a result, the region of Ribeirão Preto became the country's largest sugar and ethanol hub, with 58 sugar, ethanol producing plants. As a result of the crisis of 2014, five plants were closed in the region of Ribeirão Preto and a total of 26 plants closed in the interior of São Paulo

state, affecting sectors of the industry that had arisen due to sugar and alcohol activities. Borda, Gomes and Rezende (JORNAL DA GLOBO, 2014) cite the former factories in the city of Sertãozinho, which “concentrates the largest cluster of industries that supply parts and equipment to the mills, with 700 factories employing more than 10,000 workers. 800 have already been fired”.

Even with all the economic obstacles caused by the crisis of 2014, traveling the regions highways and local region sees witness to a sea of sugar cane on all sides, in which the city of Ribeirão Preto maintains the status of Agribusiness Capital. After all, the crisis should not destroy the primary sectors of the country. Caio Prado Jr. (1981) describes the economic history of Brazil as constructed from external demand since the beginnings of Portuguese colonization in Brazil. This configuration, therefore, is still the same in Brazilian macroeconomic terms. The current financial crisis in the country should destroy jobs artificially created by the increase in aggregate demand through credit from banks and subsidies financed by the national treasury, but it should nonetheless increase economic concentration in sectors fundamental to the Brazilian economy, namely: energy, agriculture, Livestock, transport infrastructure and the extractive sector.

7. Cooperatives, monopolistic competition and cartelization

In order to reduce the costs of production for farmers, cooperatives started being created in the 1980's. Prior to that, farmers had been responsible for the production and transportation of commodities to the Port of Santos. The problem is that Brazilian agribusiness is dictated by an oligopoly of providers of inputs and a monopoly held by cooperatives. As such farmers, the majority of whom produce coffee and other beans on small properties, are essentially held hostage to these cooperatives. They need them to finance part of the costs, for storage, and selling the outflow of the production. Put differently they have no bargaining power.

The evolution of agribusiness has shown that, historically, there has been an increase in production costs and a decrease in the prices of goods produced in agriculture, mainly due to the types of inter-relations in the "before the gate" and "after the gate" segments, basically from the oligopolies of the supplying firms of agricultural inputs and of the firms purchasing agricultural goods. From the consumer perspective, as the information media evolves and the rights increase, so too do the demands, in addition to the alternatives of the products offered.

Thus, producers of agricultural goods feel obliged to reduce their costs even further, otherwise they would not become competitive and would have to leave the business due to lack of economic support (ARAÚJO, 2008, 75-76, translated by the author).

Brazil's agricultural export sector is faced with the dilemma of having to cope with the rising cost of economic activities in the country and the oscillations of market prices. Thus, Kalil (2016) concludes that large commodity producers have greater bargaining power because they do not depend on the intermediation and financing of agricultural cooperatives, since they are able to directly negotiate their production. However, both medium and small producers tend to have their resources limited to the credit supply of banks and cooperatives. Even in the sugar and alcohol production sectors, landlords are subject not only to market prices, but also to production costs and business risks, which are factors that influence the value to be received from renting land.

Therefore, it can be verified that economic power in Brazil, especially in the metropolitan region of Ribeirão Preto, is concentrated in a limited number of giant sugar and alcohol producers, banks, credit unions and a few companies that supply input. This scenario, which is not unique to the region studied, is a characteristic of Brazilian monopolistic competition. Excessive government regulation eventually creates barriers that favor large established firms, further stifling smaller initiatives. In addition, the control of regulatory agencies in the country, as well as the various agencies at the state and federal levels, result in a process of the cartelization of important sectors for Brazilian society and, in relation to the study in question, for the metropolitan region of Ribeirão Preto.

8. Civic engagement in the metropolitan region of Ribeirão Preto

In order to understand the participation of citizens in the public administration of municipalities and in intra-regional decisions, it is necessary to understand the political culture of the region, which is, in a way, reflective of the country's political culture. The average Brazilian, generally speaking, has a personal relationship with political agents. Democracy in Brazil was made with a reverse liberalism, so that the same patrimonialism practices of the empire and the same personal relations with the leaders were lied to, something similar to the barony relations established when the politics were directed according to the interests of an agrarian aristocracy. In regards to this question, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda points out that:

The fact is that, the impersonal ideology of democratic liberalism has never been naturalized among us. We only effectively assimilate these principles to where they coincided with the sheer denial of an uncomfortable authority, confirming our instinctive horror of hierarchies, and allowing us to deal with rulers with familiarity. Democracy in Brazil has always had a pitiful misunderstanding. A rural and semi-feudal aristocracy imported it and tried to accommodate it, wherever possible, to its rights or privileges, the same privileges that had been, in the Old World, the target of the bourgeoisie's struggle against the aristocrats. And so they were able to incorporate into the traditional situation,

at least as a façade or external decoration, some slogans that seemed the most appropriate for the time and have been exalted in books and speeches (Holanda, 2012, 160, translated by the author).

Holanda's assertion makes it clear that the nature of the republican institutions in Brazil, based on private interests in a praxiological model that retains verticalized relations of domination of one class over another clothed in a populist discourse that serves as a mechanism of manipulation and satisfaction of the masses (DEBERT, 1979), configuring what the philosopher Antonio Paim (2000) calls "Patrimonialist State", in which public administrators make private use of public property, both to acquire personal and party advantages, and to remain in power. This image of the leader in direct contact with the masses, typical of populism, culminates in the exaltation of state power through the figure of the leader, which contributes to the maintenance of a central planning model that, in Brazil, presents very strict, transvestites of democratic State of Law. In this way:

[...] the personalistic relationship that populist practices foster, especially in regards to the mass, adds to the values of the provider state, establishes a relation of dependence with the state entity resulting in the transference of the arbitrariness of the individual to the State, that becomes determined in place of the citizens what their welfare will be [...] (GAMBINI, 2016, p. 1150, translated by the author).

Gambini deals with the same "patrimonialist state" of Antonio Paim, however, he does so from the perspective of the welfare state, in which Holanda (2012, p. 145) advocates that "It has been seen how the criticism directed against the recent tendency of some states to create vast insurance and providence devices is based solely on the fact that they leave very little margin for individual action and also on the depletion to which these institutes condemn all forms of competition". These are the elements that obstruct citizens' participation in public policies. In addition, the idea of a provider state serves distributive ideals. The increase in state rigging and the implementation of income distribution policies has led to a lack of solidarity among the different social groups in Brazil, creating a relationship not only of dependence but also of clientelism. It is therefore rare to witness any civic participation in public administration, since, in fact, Brazilian institutions as well as political movements tend to occur historically from the top down.

Government initiatives seldom require citizen participation, and when it is required to achieve results, the accession process tends to be elective, but not participatory, so that people support public policies but do not engage civically in the political action.

Public policies involving collective actions of citizens are quite specific in the region of

Ribeirão Preto. Considering its area of influence, we can mention the initiative of the Association of Rural Producers of Jeriquara, whose municipality is located in the microregion of Franca, which participates in the project "Microbacias II", an initiative of the São Paulo state government to give more autonomy to the rural producers of the region through subsidies for the acquisition of machinery by farmers' associations and also of the expansion of business opportunities through the addition of value by the certification of agricultural production. In the city of Ribeirão Preto, the "Microbacias II" project was implemented together with the Environment Secretariat, in order to promote sustainable practices for family agriculture in the region.

Results of such initiatives are usually positive to begin with. However, the involvement of public bodies, such as INCRA⁴, the Environment Secretariat and the city hall tends to generate conflicts of interest between public agents and farmers, as the associations end up being subordinated to public authorities, many of them in elective positions which creates distortions.

Many of the larger initiatives are taking place from private initiatives to public power, as is the case of the recycling cooperatives. The job of recyclers was recognized by the Ministry of Labor and Employment as a professional occupation in Brazil in 2002. Since then, many initiatives have been created to provide better work conditions to the recyclers. The law no. 12.305/2010, as defined by the Ministry of Environment, proposes a National Solid Waste Policy (PNRS) which might be implemented in the whole country by both local and state governments. Some of the achievements of these policies are the reduction of poverty through the inclusion of recyclers in a more productive activity with autonomy and dignity, the reduction of dumping grounds, the promotion of sustainable habitats in society, adequate waste disposal, and a 20% recycling rate until 2015. Of course, it did not happen.

Recycling cooperatives are often dependent on local authorities and were created with the support of non-governmental organizations. Normally, associates lack education and also start with non-centered forms of administration, but tend to become more hierarchical as long as they become more structured. The main reason for their foundation is to facilitate the trade between the associates and the companies who can buy their materials.

The main difficulties encountered by the "Mãos Dadas" (donors) cooperative in Ribeirão Preto are dependent on public power and a lack of citizen awareness. The initiative that should

⁴ INCRA – Instituto Nacional de colonização e Reforma Agrária (National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform).

give more autonomy to the collectors, also depends on the participation of citizens in the organization and disposal of garbage for selective collection, in addition to the support of Empresa Estre which is contracted by the city. Yields are still quite low for recyclers and the market for recycled materials is fairly incipient.

In the microregion of Franca, the catholic organization Pastoral do Menor gathered the recyclers from the city of Franca and helped them to create their cooperative in the year 2000, Cooperfran. This association had the support from the catholic organization and the city hall that gave them property, machines and continues to provide them with subsidies to continue their activities. Despite this, 25% of the profit goes to the Pastoral do Menor without any reason, while the associates have a gain of R\$800,00 per person in a good month. It is less than the local minimum wage and they continue to depend on subsidies from the city hall to run the organization.

The Federal Constitution of 1988 in force established mechanisms of popular participation in order to ensure the exercise of fundamental guarantees to the democratic State of Law.

The Federal Constitution of 1988 declares that Brazil is a Democratic State of Right that has among its foundations the citizenship (art.1, II). In the rest of the constitutional text, a set of mechanisms is necessary for the exercise of this citizenship to be established, with reference to public management, the so-called right to participation, is to be regulated by law (art.37, §3. "The law will discipline the forms of user participation in direct and indirect Public Administration"). Article 193 deals with the general principles of Social Security, more explicitly defines participation, with direct reference to "workers, entrepreneurs and retirees". Article 198 deals with public health actions and services; The general guideline is "community participation". Article 204 of the governmental actions in the area of social assistance establishes "the participation of the population through representative organizations in the formulation of policies and in the control of actions at all levels" (ROCHA, 2008, p.137, translated by the author).

In accordance with article 37 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution, the City Statute determined by Law 10.257 / 2001, which regulates the chapter "Urban Policy", defines, among other provisions, municipal councils, established through Organic Law and is formed by members of civil society. This type of instrument should ensure that public laws and policies are not only the responsibility of elected representatives. However, there are distortions in this process, since the conflict between agent and principal, when considered the agency theory, is presented at a very high level in all instances of the country. This is partly due to exacerbated positivism, on the other hand one can also consider the intellectual and professional incapacitation of public agents, especially rulers.

Dr. Priscyla Mathias Scuassante (2009) observes that councils, commissions and any other mechanisms for the participation of civil society are subject to the interests of the rulers who, as a rule, manipulate established council members, since they normally present an educational deficit in the sense that the members do not have the exact size of the power they had invested when in elected for popular participation in these instances.

The Federal Constitution still provides for popular participation through plebiscite, referendum and popular initiative projects. However, it is important to consider that, in practice, the participatory role of the citizen is restricted to the limits imposed by the public body, since the final word is not the responsibility of civil society, but of the governors and legislators, there by generating a form of pseudo-democracy.

It is important to emphasize that the notion of participatory or collaborative citizenship has undergone a process of re-definition since the 1990s (ROCHA, 2008), so that citizens' participation in public administration and in the country's politics has come to be seen as solidarity action, turning to the individual action of people and companies. This process is very evident in the Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto, where companies under the name of social responsibility undertake charitable actions through foundations created to improve the living conditions of poor communities. Likewise, the constitution of NGO's has focused on activities including the environment, the referral of abandoned animals to new families, and the health care of children with AIDS.

In the meantime, ABRACCIA (Brazilian Association for the Fight against Childhood and Adult Cancers) can be highlighted, offering lodging, food, medicines, transportation to hospitals and psychological care for cancer patients resident or not in the city of Ribeirão Preto and with few financial resources. Another initiative is AJURP - The Youth Educational Association of Ribeirão Preto, whose mission is to send young learners to the labor market, improving the framework of opportunities for low income families. The AVA - Animal Life Association, provides veterinary care for both dogs and cats in addition to developing social projects to care for horses. These are some of the hundreds of initiatives distributed by the city of Ribeirão Preto, which mobilize people and volunteers with social responsibility. However, they are local, punctual initiatives that could be improved by public power, but are limited to the budget limits of the donations and the communities that are able to attend to within the municipality.

There is no model of participatory governance in Brazil. Even the mechanisms provided for in the Federal Constitution are not sufficient enough to ensure the exercise of citizenship in a collaborative manner. To the contrary, there is a marked increase in the relations between the representatives and the represented within the Brazilian political system, in which the participation of citizens in political action is restricted to the will of their rulers.

9. Final considerations

The present investigation sought to carry out a study into the institutional obstacles that impede the exercise of collaborative citizenship in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo, in order to identify some of the factors that make it difficult for people to participate in local political action in the region.

In order to reach this goal, the theoretical framework involved considerations about the Brazilian constitutional doctrine, in which one can present the institutional character of the division of the São Paulo state into Administrative, Metropolitan, microregion and urban agglomerations. These definitions were compared to the classification given by Spatial Economic Geography, which considers the central place as a *locus* of greater economic development that constitute market areas with a greater flow of goods and people in a given region.

Ribeirão Preto, within the classification of economic geography can be considered a central export base, whose area of influence extends beyond the boundaries as defined by the state government as the metropolitan region. The region has its history marked by the rise of the aristocracy of coffee in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, subsequently being replaced by sugar and alcohol factories, due to the crisis of 1929 that significantly affected coffee farmers. The strategic location of Ribeirão Preto, both in terms of logistics, with access to the Triângulo Mineiro region, São Paulo and the Port of Santos, to flow production, and in terms of communication and energy infrastructure, favored the rise of the region and the Status of Agribusiness Capital.

Notwithstanding, top-down relations prevail, as is true in the rest of the country. For this reason, it was necessary to deal with the federative character of the Brazilian institutions that were defined according to the interests of an elite, and not according to liberal ideals, so that even the mechanisms of popular participation, as defined by the Brazilian Federal Constitution, do not have the effectiveness necessary to ensure the horizontality of relations in order to promote collaborative participation. The result is that any attempt to integrate both regional (in the context

of interregional relations) and community (at the local level) become insufficient to solve the majority of the regional problems such as transport costs, bureaucracy, improvements in the communications system, environmental issues related to maintaining the environment and promoting alternative transport in cities, for example.

Despite the economic development of the Metropolitan Region of Ribeirão Preto, when confronted with the map of economic geography that would place it within the national macropole of São Paulo, with the federative and state map that delimits much smaller regions, it is observed that obstacles to regional development could be overcome if the authorities sought greater interregional integration so that people and businesses could benefit from smoother taxation, less regulation and better infrastructure conditions in public-private partnerships. This would bring not only more development, but would also increase the flow of people and other factors of production, such as capital, in order to correct regional asymmetries.

This process would only be possible with the popular support as well as support from the companies, but for that it would be necessary to improve the mechanisms of democratic participation, so that it does not continue to be only voluntary work, but that it becomes part of the political action. In this sense, it is necessary to limit the arbitration of those who are in the exercise of political power, as well as to correct the educational deficit of Brazilian citizens, since, on the one hand, the Federal Constitution guarantees privileges that differentiate public servants from the rest of the nation, contributing to the private use of public property. On the other hand, the Brazilian educational deficit in relation to the awareness of its rights and duties, contribute to a large part of the population serving as a transporter of the ruling classes.

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