

**LET'S SOLIDIFY EVEN MORE THE FOUNDATION OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION?  
FILLING OUT A THEORETICAL GAP ON COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY**

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# **LET'S SOLIDIFY EVEN MORE THE FOUNDATION OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION? FILLING OUT A THEORETICAL GAP ON COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY**

## **ABSTRACT**

This dense theoretical essay boldly aimed at reaching consensus about the communicative action theory of one of the most important philosophers for Public Administration: Jürgen Habermas. The guiding purpose of the present essay was to fill out a theoretical gap. Based on strong literature evidence on Habermas' communicative rationality, it was possible to identify two main approaches: one according to which the theory of communicative action presents an interparadigmatic character, by proposing incremental adjustments in other typologies of rationality and dialoguing with many other theoretical streams, and another approach according to which the communicative action is, in fact, the proposal of a radical adjustment, constituting a paradigmatic leap. This essay is an effort, therefore, to reach consensus on this theoretical gap in a quasi-tautological way, since the search for consensus on communicative action occurs precisely through the practice of many of its pillars such as dialogue and mutual understanding. As a secondary objective, this essay aimed at contextualizing the discussed theory into public administration, presenting its importance and also its challenges and criticisms that need to be taken into account by public administrators.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Management. Participation. Communicative Rationality.

## **1 INTRODUCING THE THEORETICAL GAP**

Instrumental rationality, grounded in the success based on the ends and pillar of Max Weber's bureaucratic model, has not allowed the social agents of the process – administrators and administered ones - to develop their actions in an emancipatory way, despite its pretension to improve human relations through labor division and homogenization of social actions within organizations. In turn, the substantive rationality of Herbert Simon, also brilliantly discussed by the Brazilian sociologist Guerreiro Ramos, is based on the individual-rational perception of the interaction of facts at a given moment, which means that the social actors within the organizations must develop their relations according to their particular way of perceiving rational action in relation to ends (Tenório, 1990).

From this encounter between the instrumental and substantive rationalities, the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas emerges with the proposition of communicative rationality, the focus of this theoretical essay. His proposal of communicative rationality (or communicative action) contrasts with instrumental rationality, suggesting a more democratic and less alienating relationship, however, Habermas does not consider that every individual's opinion should be taken isolatedly, as substantive rationality suggests, but he bases his proposal on the search for solutions through dialogue, best argument and consensus.

Communicative rationality, though considered to be capable of 'unlocking the iron cage', within which bureaucratic society lives trapped and alienated, is also criticized (Irazábal, 2009), and some of its criticisms became motivators of the present study. The main inspiration for writing the present essay was the paper 'Habermas, the conceptual debates about public-private-social spheres and the communicative action in organization theory', published at the Journal 'Revista de Administração, Contabilidade e Economia – RACE', in which the authors Couto and Carrieri (2017) delineated elements of the Habermas and Hannah Arendt theories about the division between public, private and social spheres, as well

as about communicative action in Habermas. Since the communicative action theory - one of the topics discussed in the referred paper – was highlighted by the authors as very important to the public sphere, especially with respect to public administrators’ attempts to foment democracy and social integration, we realized that this theory deserves to be further discussed and deeper understood.

In order to achieve this goal, this essay sought to intensively reflect about one of the criticisms received by Habermas’ communication action theory. This specific criticism points out that the supporters of Habermas theory of communicative action, despite a common basilar understanding (enlightenment and emancipation of man), end up assuming many different theoretical lines derived from this theory, not reaching a consensus. That is, the theorists who support the ‘theory of consensus’ - theory of communicative action – paradoxically are not able to reach consensus about it. For example, some of them believe that Habermas’ communicative action theory is an incremental proposition and others believe it represents a radical shift from other types of rationality.

What we want in this theoretical essay is precisely to clarify this theoretical gap: does the transition proposed by Habermas from other rationalities types towards communicative rationality constitute a proposal of an incremental or radical adjustment? Does Habermas propose only an interparadigmatic theory or a paradigmatic leap? The answer to this question, therefore, is the consensus that is sought hereby between the authors of this paper and its readers with respect to the meaning of the Habermasian proposal of communicative action. What about, then, we try to reach consensus on the ‘author of consensus’ (Habermas)?

Aiming at turning this essay even more profound, we will then attempt to position Habermas’ communicative action theory in the struggle ‘Liberal State versus Social Welfare State’. Besides, we will attempt to position it with respect to the well-known ‘New Public Management’, a very important and current theme in Public Administration.

The present essay will be subdivided into six sessions. On the first session, this brief introduction. On the second, an examination of the instrumental rationality of Max Weber and the substantive rationality of Herbert Simon. On the third, the conceptual separation between communicative action and other types of rationalities. On the fourth, the importance challenges of communicative action for public administrators. On the fifth, emphasis on the guiding question of this essay. Finally, on the sixth, conclusions made based on the raised strong evidences from the literature.

It is important to emphasize that the consensus aimed in this present essay focuses specifically on Habermas’ theory of communicative action, since this author has also brought unique theoretical contributions to the study of democracy through the theory of deliberative democracy and public sphere theory, themes that naturally have high interface with this study, but will not be deeply discussed herein.

## **2 INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY VERSUS SUBSTANTIVE RATIONALITY**

Rationality is a broadly discussed subject in the Public Administration arena. The origins of the term ‘reason’ refer to activity in the human psyche that enables the individual to distinguish between good and evil, between false and true, and, thus, to govern his life in society (Ramos, 1989).

With respect to organizations (public or private ones), instrumental rationality is the process that seeks to achieve technical objectives linked to economic interests through the instrumentalization of social action based on calculation, formalized in the mechanization of social relations, in labor division and in the maximization of resources (Tenório, 1990; Serva,

1997a). Its constituent elements are: a) calculation - utilitarian projection of the consequences of the acts; b) purposes - technical, economic or political goals; c) maximization of resources - search for maximum efficiency and effectiveness, without ethical questioning; d) results - the achievement of standards, levels and stages considered victorious; e) performance - high performance in activities centered on utility; f) utility - economic dimension of interactions; g) profitability - measure of economic return, and h) interpersonal strategy - planned influence over others from the anticipation of their probable reactions (Serva, 1997a).

Thus, instrumental rationality became hegemonic first in private organizational administrative practices (Vizeu, 2006), expanding also to the public administration (Brulon, Falcão Vieira, & Darbilly, 2013). The prevalence of instrumental rationality in productive organizations leads to a market-centered society, responsible for psychological insecurity, lower quality of life, increased pollution, waste of natural resources, and an organizational theory incapable of creating social spaces satisfying individuals (Ramos, 1989).

Despite the predominance of instrumental rationality, Simon (1991) proposed the substantive rationality. He argues that one is not able to perform calculations all the time, in this way, rationality would be limited. Limited rationality can be understood as the limits of human beings' ability to adapt ideally, or even satisfactorily, to complex environments.

Barros and Passos (2000) affirm that there is a dichotomization between the dimensions of instrumental and substantive rationalities, which expands to the discussions about performance criteria in public administration (Brulon, Falcão Vieira, & Darbilly, 2013). Substantive rationality can be circumscribed by organizing only a limited area of life and leaving all other inert ones (Kalberg, 1980). A substantive approach to organizational theory is concerned systematically with the means of eliminating unnecessary compulsions by acting upon human activities in organizations (Ramos, 1989). For Guerreiro Ramos, this approach is interested in viable means of reduction (even elimination) of discontent and in the increase of personal satisfaction of the members of the organization.

Substantive rational action is oriented to two dimensions: an individual one, which refers to self-realization, understood as concretization of potentialities and satisfaction; and a collective one, which refers to alignment, in the directions of social responsibilities and satisfaction (Serva, 1997a). Its constitutive elements are: a) self-realization - process of realization of individual potential; b) understanding - rational agreements and consensus mediated by free communication under the protection of social responsibility and satisfaction; c) ethical judgment - judgment based on values, which is processed through rational debate; d) authenticity - integrity, honesty and openness of individuals; e) emancipatory values - values of change and social improvement in the direction of collective well-being, and f) autonomy - condition of individuals to be able to act and express freely.

This way, Ramos (1989) points out that, through substantive rationality, individuals could lead their personal lives in the direction of self-realization, balancing with the reach of social satisfaction. By approaching the ideas of Guerreiro Ramos and Habermas, Serva (1997b) emphasizes that substantive and communicative rationalities (this last to be detailed in the next section) complement each other in relation to the emancipation of the human being in the quest for self-fulfillment imposed by contemporary society.

The proposition of substantive rationality sounds very different from the instrumental rationality, which pursues individual success without worrying about ethics, based only on utilitarian calculation and economic success. Ramos (1989) recognized that most productive organizations rely on market-oriented and self-centered instrumental rationality by nature. As a consequence, the organizational environment has become subject to power abuses and to domination, among other damages. In an even wider analysis, individuals embark on a

permanent competition that generates loss of quality of life, anxieties and psychic pathologies (Serva, 1997b).

Having briefly presented the main characteristics of instrumental and substantive rationalities, let us now deepen the proposition of communicative action, culminating in the discussion of the guiding problem of the present theoretical essay.

### **3 THE CONCEPTUAL SEPARATION BETWEEN COMMUNICATIVE ACTION AND OTHER TYPES OF RATIONALITIES**

Firstly, it is necessary to deeper distinguish the Weberian instrumental rationality from the Habermasian communicative rationality. While the former develops a mediation between theory and practice from technical and formal postulates, the latter promotes this same mediation through dialogue between the social agents of the process. One of the major criticisms of Habermas' proposal on Weber's instrumental decision-making process is that it denies the possibility of the 'administered ones' (citizens) to express their opinion or reason to the 'administrators'. According to Habermas, managers and subordinates need to negotiate dialogically on how outcomes are to be achieved, thus, decision-making is democratized as participants advocate their reasons based on the best argument (Tenório, 1990).

According to Tenório (2000), Habermas's goal is to elaborate a theory that allows reflective knowledge and a political praxis that questions existing social, political and economic structures, that is, a theory that sets free the human being from dogmatism and that leads him toward emancipation. We can perceive, therefore, a certain questioning role of communicative rationality concerning the truth affirmed about the facts, as opposed to the passive acceptance of what is imposed, which underlies instrumental rationality. "What has always been 'taken for granted' can be questioned thanks to the intrinsic characteristics of communicative action" (Freitag, 1995, p.141).

According to communicative action, social actors move through a natural language, "using culturally transmitted interpretations and refer to something simultaneously in an objective world, its common social world and its own subjective world, that is, it is the abandonment of an egocentric understanding of the world" (Habermas 1984, p. 392). It is possible to identify communicative rationality within our own everyday language, since men, in uttering a sentence, already demonstrate a claim to be understood (Aragão, 1992). For Pinto (1995, p. 79), "This [communicative] reason is completely different from instrumental reason, which is structured in the non-communicative use of knowledge in actions directed toward ends".

Aguiar, Heller and Melo (2012) affirm that, in the processes of discussion and of dialogical search for consensus, individuals have the chance to express their opinions, recognize misunderstandings, make clear their goals and needs, think better about principles, norms and values and contribute to the achievement of mutual learning and solutions that improve their lives. According to Cavalcante (2001, p. 246), while for instrumental action the subject claims "effectiveness for his action in the sense that the chosen means are propitious to the achievement of the proposed end, in the communicative action, the subject will claim truth, correction, veracity or intelligibility for his utterance".

Habermas was initially inspired by the 'world of life' concept of Alfred Schutz's phenomenology. According to Schutz (1979, p. 72), 'world of life' means "the intersubjective world that existed long before our birth, experienced and interpreted by others, our predecessors, as an organized world". Habermas, then, overcomes this understanding, proposing the adjustment of this concept. According to him, 'world of life' fulfills not only

the role of context, but also offers convictions, norms, and values, which serve as the basis for the communicative agents to generate consensus interpretations.

Macedo (1993) contrasts instrumental and communicative rationalities by emphasizing that many relevant issues are no longer discussed when political decisions are transformed into merely technical decisions. As the rules of technical discourse are not under the domain of all people, those who do not master the privileged technical language end up being alienated from the communication process. Habermas (2004, p. 107) says that the communicative rationality is expressed in the unifying force of speech oriented to mutual understanding, “a discourse that assures the speakers involved a shared ‘world of life’ of intersubjectively and, at the same time, the horizon within which all can refer to a single and even objective world”.

The distinction between instrumental rationality and the communicative one - discussed so far in this section - seems to be simpler than between communicative rationality and the substantive one proposed by Herbert Simon, because both substantive and communicative rationalities are more democratic proposals compared to instrumental rationality, however, they have important singularities that need to be deeper clarified. Let us strive, therefore, in a more objective and precise way, in this second attempt of distinction.

Substantive rationality is a natural characteristic of the human being through which people can lead their lives in the direction of self-realization, counterbalancing this quest for emancipation and self-realization with the attainment of social satisfaction, that is, taking into account the right of other individuals to do the same. The key points for achieving this balance would be the rational debate and the ethical-value judgment of actions (Serva, 1997b).

While substantive rationality claims that the opinion (reason) of each individual must be taken into account and respected, that is, the number of administered individuals corresponds to the number of reasons to be taken into account in decision making, Habermas, however, understands that those administered ones (citizens, in the Public Administration context), through dialogue, must reach consensus, in the sense that the best argument will be obtained from mutual understanding, in an interactive context free from coercion (Freitag, 1995). Habermas’ ideas of communicative action are considered to be central elements of democracy (Huxley, 2000). Therefore, although the substantive and communicative rationalities oppose the instrumental one, taking into consideration the opinion of the administered, the substantive considers the amount of isolated reasons while the communicative considers a joint and consensual reason obtained from the individual reasons.

#### **4 IMPORTANCE AND CHALLENGES OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS**

We have seen in the previous session that Habermas’ ideas of communicative action start from the assumption that consensus is possible from the understanding of actions, even though there are diffuse interests between individuals (Habermas, 2002). His ideas based on solidarity, best argument and consensus are important to Public Administration specially because they can be considered ways through which society can be guided towards democracy and social integration (Lima & Rivera, 2009).

Sanderson (1999) gives us practical examples of attempts to apply communicative action in Public Administration, especially in government practice. He highlights the example of the United Kingdom government which, from 1997 on, has sought to renew its local democracy through more direct forms of participation, empowering citizens and making their

views heard in decision-making. At the time in this scenario, communicative rationality was seen as an alternative to solve the problems of instrumental rationality of bureaucracy based essentially on professional and managerial power. The author also presents the well-known 'medical model' as a critique of instrumental rationality. According to this model, the mastery of professionals, managers and specialists, preached by bureaucracy, is similar to a doctor who holds all the knowledge - equivalent to the technocrat - to cure the patient's illness - equivalent to the population. The citizen, therefore, would play the role of an elderly patient, compliant, tired, fragile and dependent. This context is not ideal according to the communicative action theory since the opinion of the citizens is not taken into account in the solution of the problem. Still further detailing the metaphor, the doctor would be interested in knowing what the patient is feeling and not their opinion on how best to cure the disease.

One of the key expressions to understand how Habermas' communicative action theory can be put into practice in Public Administration is 'social negotiation'. It refers to a participatory approach that seeks to identify and take into account the views of all relevant stakeholder groups. However, different stakeholders will have different points of view on an issue and will need, through dialogue, to negotiate differences and build shared meanings (Sanderson, 1999).

Another key expression to understand how communicative action theory can be put into practice in Public Administration is 'collaborative government', which conceives forms of participation, disseminates information, shares responsibilities, and even serves as a defender of marginalized citizens. This concept is closely linked to what is known as the discretionary power of the public administrator, contrary to a mere obedience of the law (Kelly, 2004). The author also raises an important criticism to the tricks used in the participation practice. As administrators use one type rationality and citizens (administered) another, the former become frustrated with the latter and begin to systematically exclude them from public discussion. This is done, for example, through public hearings held in places and at times that hinder citizen participation.

For Habermas (1987), some typologies of problems such as the nuclear threat, prejudice against minorities and misery in the third world are not merely technical problems and cannot be solved, therefore, only with bureaucratic administrative power based on instrumental rationality. The decisions must be born of a process of reflection where the free discussion of the themes and proposed solutions are assured, simultaneously guaranteeing effectiveness and responsibility of the participants for the decisions taken (Habermas, 1991). Communicative rationality preaches that our greatest authority must be a good argument and that, therefore, our fellows ('the others') are our main source of guidance.

However, public administrators need to consider some significant challenges that come along with when it is attempted to put communicative action theory into practice, especially because the success of communicative action demands a deep knowledge of the field, the rules and elements that make up the 'world of life' (Couto & Carrieri, 2017). Moreover, we believe that public administrators need to be familiar with some of the existent criticisms on Habermas' ideas of communicative action, which can offer deep reflections about the praxis of this theory. We will try to summarize some of them hereafter.

An important critique to be taken into account by public administrators was done by Deleuze (1988, 2014) and Foucault (2008a, 2008b). Their main criticism is focused on the possible power asymmetries between individuals. They believe that consensus, a pillar for Habermas' communicative action, will always be permeated by asymmetries between the involved subjects. According to them, these subjects will strategically elaborate intersubjectivity in order to achieve their own wills, representing a power dispute.

Another key critique to be taken into consideration by public administrators was done by Dussel (1998), Mignolo (1993) and Escobar (1988). Their main criticism is based on the fact that Habermas' ideas of communicative action present a premise that all individuals have the freedom, equality and dignity to participate, jointly, in the space of dialogue, which is something that, according to the referred authors, has never been guaranteed in any historical moment. They believe that, in the political praxis, only a few groups are indeed heard by public administrators (State), while the others are ignored.

At last, an interesting critique has been raised by Chambers and Kopstein (2001). They argue that, even when a consensus is satisfactorily reached, it will not necessarily imply the good and progress of civil society, which means that consensus, one of the pillars of Habermas' ideas of communicative action, will not always result in something positive for society.

Even though some criticisms exist regarding the communicative action theory, they do not deny the importance of the same to Public Administration, especially when it comes to municipal councils and participation in public management, something that has been gaining more and more relevance in Brazil (Couto & Carrieri, 2017, Martins, 2015).

## **5 COMMUNICATIVE ACTION: AN INTERPARADIGMATIC THEORY OR A PARADIGMATIC LEAP PROPOSAL?**

Having understood the main singularities of instrumental, substantive and communicative rationalities, and having discussed how communicative action theory can be put into practice in Public Administration, its importance and challenges, we will now try to deeper look at the guiding question of this essay, raising the direct and indirect thoughts of relevant authors about the meaning of the Habermasian proposal of communicative action. By 'direct thoughts', we mean the explicit opinion that some authors bring on the Habermasian proposal and, by 'indirect thoughts', we mean the possible inferences based on their statements on the subject.

When we read the writings of authors who stood out in the discussions about the theory of communicative action, we come across some as Freitag (1995), who considers Habermas's proposal of communicative action as a radical paradigm shift from subjectivity to intersubjectivity, from monological reason to dialogic reason - which is metaphorically paraphrased in this essay as a 'paradigmatic leap'. We also come across other authors with different opinions, such as Siebeneichler et al. (2007), who understand that Habermas's communicative rationality can only be constructed on a discursive coherence between distinct theories, a point of view that acknowledges the interparadigmatic character of this proposal. This is precisely the dilemma (and theoretical gap) guiding this essay: is Habermas' communicative rationality the proposal of a paradigmatic leap - radical adjustment - or is it a catch-all that takes advantage of other types of rationality and paradigms - incremental adjustment?

Rossetti (2010, p.4) understands Habermas's proposal of communicative rationality as a paradigm shift. "This paradigm shift brings new foundations of reason, human being and society, leaves aside the paradigm of the conscience and proposes that the rationality does not depend directly on the subject, but on intersubjectivity".

Freitag (1995) considers that the conceptualization itself of communicative rationality already presupposes a radical change of paradigm, once reason is jointly implemented, through a dialogical process. Silva (2011) corroborates this idea of a paradigmatic leap by stating that Habermas, by performing the substitution of the paradigm of consciousness for



the language paradigm, emphasizes that language must be seen as an expression of understanding in a normative and evaluative context.

In contrast, Pinto (1995) states that Habermas constructs his theory of communicative action in a permanent dialogue with authors from a wide range of theoretical lines, such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Mead, Lukacs, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Parsons. In this way, Habermas incorporates a series of themes and contributions that have been developed by functionalism, phenomenology, Marxism and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Habermas' main origin, which can be considered as incremental features of his theory of communicative action.

Another author who corroborates the incremental trait of Habermas' theory of communicative action is Barreto (1993). In analyzing various types of rationality, he comes to the conclusion that the conceptions of Habermas - communicative rationality - and of Guerreiro Ramos - substantive rationality - in relation to the proposition of non-oppressive and imposing behaviors, are not contradictory but complementary, that is, the proposals of Habermas and the Brazilian sociologist are not exclusive but incremental, since both highlight the subject. The complementarity between the two theories in question is further evidenced by the fact that both consider rational debate an essential requirement for the harmonization of associated human life.

According to Mílovic (2002, p. 196), "Habermas follows Searle's theory of speech acts. The act of speech is the first unit of communication, that is, all communication presupposes acts of speech". "With his speech act, the speaker seeks to achieve his goal of achieving communication with the listener about something" (Habermas, 2002, p.193). This is one more evidence from Habermas's proposal that indicate an incremental character, since it follows an already existing theoretical line.

For Habermas (1984, p. 285), "communicative action occurs whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated, not through egocentric calculations of success, but through acts of reaching understanding". This means that, in communicative action, there is an orientation not to individual success, but it is pursued in a joint, interactive and dialogically negotiated way. This concept, in spite of exposing a significant rupture from individualism to collectivism, which reinforces one of the proposals discussed in this essay on radical adjustment (paradigmatic leap), was constructed by Habermas based on the symbolic interactionism of Mead, the concept of language games of Wittgenstein, Austin's speech acts theory and Gadamer's hermeneutics (Pinto, 1995). This strengthens the other proposal analyzed in this article, which understands the interparadigmatic character of the Habermasian proposition, constituting an incremental adjustment of other theoretical lines. At this point, we perceive that the dilemma seems to intensify even more, since the concept of communicative action itself conveys the idea of paradigmatic leap and, by its foundation, radiates its interparadigmatic character. Let's move on.

Serva (1997b) states that, from the 1980s on, Habermas turned sharply against Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic of enlightenment and proclaimed the need for a radical paradigm shift in the approach to rationality, viewing the emancipation of man in the face of the constraints imposed by bureaucratic society. Although he makes explicit that Habermas' theory constitutes a paradigmatic leap, on the other hand he emphasizes that communicative and instrumental rationalities present a common point, namely the concern for individual and collective goals. The difference lies in 'how' these goals are sought, whether by imposition or consensual form. This analysis shows us that the referred author, even though clarifies the primordial differences between the two typologies of rationality, also shows that there are common points, which reveals the incremental character of communicative rationality. It is

noteworthy, therefore, that the same author, in approaching Habermas' communicative action against other types of rationality, ends simultaneously and paradoxically, evidencing his traces of both incremental and radical change.

Habermas criticizes the influence of money and power on society, classifying them as discretionary and reifying means of communication, the former harming the private sphere - the egocentric functioning of the market - and the latter the public sphere - dysfunctions of the bureaucracy. In his words: "Just as the private sphere is sloped and eroded by the economic system, so is the public sphere by the administrative system" (Habermas 1987, p. 325). For Freitag (1988), the process of reification of the components of society, called by Habermas 'colonization of world of life', was exactly what Weber called 'the loss of men's freedom', what Lukacs called 'alienation', and what Marcuse called 'unidimensionalization'. It is valid to observe that Freitag (1988), even explicitly defending the paradigmatic leap of communicative rationality, implicitly accentuates its interparadigmatic nature by exposing the similarities of communicative action with other authors' approaches.

By now, one apparently paradoxical reflection we can raise is that, despite Habermas's criticisms of money and power as colonizers of the 'world of life', one of the main points of his proposal for communicative rationality is the maintenance of the economic and administrative systems guided by the mechanisms of the market and bureaucratic administration, but all of them submitted to external control. This reflection leads us to reinforce the idea of the incremental or interparadigmatic character of the Habermasian theory. It does not, therefore, propose the extinction of bureaucracy and the market, but it emphasizes the importance of citizen participation and control over governmental decisions through, for example, nongovernmental organizations, popular councils, discussion forums and the valorization of deliberation mechanisms that stimulate understanding and not merely the conquest of power.

In the words of Pinto (1995, p.93-94), Habermas does not propose the destruction of the state-bureaucratic apparatus, or of the market. Basically, what he suggests is "a procedural democracy, a 'sovereignty in procedure' in which the mechanisms of market action and administrative power will be controlled within the framework of popular councils". It is, therefore, another argument about the incremental trait of communicative rationality, since for Habermas the bureaucratic foundations must be maintained, but subject to greater external control, that is, to a greater participation of the administered ones (citizens, in the context of Public Administration). We can firmly understand here that the communicative rationality of Habermas proposes an incremental adjustment both on instrumental rationality and on substantive rationality.

Aiming at turning this essay even more profound, we can go deeper with another reflection: on which side is exactly positioned the communicative action theory of Habermas in the struggle 'Liberal State versus Social Welfare State'? Is there a radical positioning or a middle ground? The fact that we have already presented in this essay that Habermas criticizes the influence of money on society as a means of undisputed and reifying communication could lead us erroneously to the conclusion that this theorist opposes the Liberal State, which is based on the laws of the market, on relationships geared towards ends and individual success. That seems to be, for the given reasons, a valid conclusion. However, a special care is needed in this analysis. Habermas's opposition to the Liberal State can lead us to the heedless conclusion that it automatically supports the Welfare State for all the social benefits it brings to society, especially in countries of advanced capitalism, as highlighted by Pinto (1995). This is the key point: in spite of the advantages derived from the Welfare State as the reduction of social inequalities, this State is also in opposition to the Habermas

communicative rationality, since it is based on an interventionist government that controls corporate actions. In other words, the interventionist state (Welfare State), which ultimately brings benefits to the administered ones (citizens), does not take their views into account as it should, not favoring dialogue or consensus, pillars of the communicative action theory.

Habermas (1987) corroborates this idea by noting that, despite the process of state intervention having proved very efficient in guaranteeing the survival of the capitalist system, it has unleashed crises of legitimization of the administered ones, removing their emancipatory potential. In addition, Pinto (1995) reinforces that the strong presence of the State has a harmful psychological effect in the sense of discouraging investments and limits the role of the citizen to a mere voter with restricted political decision-making power. The more the Welfare State expands its care network on the spheres of private life, the greater the pathological side effects of a juridification that involves both bureaucratization and monetization of central spheres of the 'world of life'. In short, we conclude this specific reflection acknowledging that communicative rationality takes no side in the struggle 'Liberal State vs. Social Welfare State', which strengthens the idea that the Habermasian proposal is incremental.

The complementarity between communicative and substantive rationalities is evidenced by Serva (1995). For him, Guerreiro Ramos stresses that substantive rationality is the substrate of action and theory that seeks to promote the proper regulation of associated human life. For the same purposes, Habermas says that the rational orientation of communicative action lies in the attainment of understanding among men. We find here another point of non-radical distinction from the Habermasian proposition when compared to other types of reason.

Even making the proper distinction between instrumental and communicative rationality, Cavalcante (2001) understands that the latter includes the former. He justifies that the instrumental reason is reduced to technical knowledge and that communicative reason takes into account a plurality of knowledges, including the technical one. It is, therefore, one more author who shows that the Habermasian proposal of communicative rationality has an incremental character, since it does not claim the total abandonment of technical knowledge.

In addition to the dialogue between communicative rationality and the struggle 'Liberal state vs. Social Welfare State', discussed previously, we can make our reflections even more robust by making a dialogue of communicative rationality with the well-known 'New Public Management', a very important and current theme in Public Administration. Some authors, like Sanderson (1999), position Habermas' communicative action theory before the New Public Management. Going straight to the point, according to these authors, communicative rationality opposes this 'Managerialism' approach because its main focus is not democracy, but control, evaluation and efficiency. In addition, Sanderson (1999) emphasizes that corporate statutes and regiments, which are not very clear to all administered ones (private and public employees) - too technical -, also constitute barriers to their participation in the decision making of private and public companies. At this point, we can perceive a more radical opposition of the communicative rationality with respect to other theories, in this case the New Public Management.

Moving towards a conclusion, we can clearly see by the many interwoven views of the authors presented so far - who obviously do not exhaust the discussions already made in the academia about communicative action - that the Habermasian theory proposes an incremental adjustment to other types of rationality and that, at the same time, represents, in fact, a radical leap from other types of rationality and theories.

In order to further intensify the dilemma presented in this paper and finish our thoughts on the current session, what about we focus now on evidence brought by the communicative action theory's author himself? What does he say about it more directly?

The idea of radical adjustment – paraphrased as ‘paradigmatic leap’ in this essay - is reinforced by Habermas himself:

I intend to argue that a shift from paradigm to that of communication theory will make possible a return to the task that was interrupted with the critique of instrumental reason. This change presupposes the abandonment of relations ‘subject-object’ to relations ‘subject-other subject’, that is, the components of society cannot be seen as simple things (reification), but they must have their opinion taken into account in the search for mutual understanding (Habermas, 1984, p. 386).

Later, Habermas (1990, p.276) reaffirms his proposal for radical adjustment by saying that “the paradigm of object knowledge must be replaced by the paradigm of mutual understanding between subjects capable of speaking and acting”. In addition, Habermas affirms that a paradigm only loses its force when denied by another of definite form. For him, the work of deconstruction, however enthusiastic it may be, “can only have definable consequences when the paradigm of self-consciousness, of self-reference of a subject who knows and acts alone, is replaced by another, by the paradigm of intercomprehension” (Habermas, 1990, p. 288).

However, the author himself also reveals the incremental character of his theory of communicative rationality in seeking a middle ground. Habermas (1997) criticizes the political reduction to an individualistic and competitive logic - questioning the instrumental rationality - but also questions the exacerbated and even utopian idea of a robust and integrated collective will of people. This clearly shows that he seeks, therefore, to find a balance between these polar positions, articulating both.

Moreover, in presenting the tripartite theory of rationality that includes the epistemological, teleological and communicative roots, Habermas (2002) shows that communicative rationality is not a radical leap from the other two typologies of rationality, but an additional component, which reinforces the idea of incremental adjustment:

Communicative rationality remains at the same level as epistemological and teleological rationality, not constituting the dominant structure of rationality, but rather one of the three nuclear structures that are, however, interconnected among themselves by the discursive rationality that results from communicative rationality (Habermas, 2002, p.185).

After our journey through so many ideas related to communicative action theory, and after deeply reflecting about its importance and challenges to Public Administration, we acknowledge here that the guiding dilemma of the present essay remains. Surprisingly as it may be, we have just found our precious conclusion. Let us present it.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

By raising and intersecting the ideas of various authors about Habermas's communicative action theory, we have come to the conclusion, based on strong literature evidence, that the answer is 'yes' to both hypotheses confronted as the guiding question of the present essay, which indicates that they are not excluding whatsoever. This means that the Habermasian proposal presents several incremental characteristics compared to other typologies of rationality and other theories, but also constitutes a paradigmatic leap.

Some authors have been adept at the understanding that communicative rationality is the proposal of a radical adjustment by its own concept, while others have emphasized the incremental character of this theory. We have also brought thoughts from authors who have revealed, directly and indirectly, that communicative rationality is, simultaneously, a proposition of a paradigmatic leap with interparadigmatic characteristics. This was noticeable even when the author of the theory (Habermas) was focused, which ended up reinforcing our conclusion.

The robust discussion allowed us to understand that the fact that we consider the theory of communicative action as possessing an interparadigmatic character does not mean that this theory consists of a mere summary of several other theoretical lines, but a theory that surpasses many others with which it dialogues, something that has been also reinforced by McCarthy (1984).

It was our purpose in this essay to foster the validity of our arguments. The strength of an argument, in a given context, is measured by the pertinence of the reasons and manifested, among other ways, "by the ability to convince the participants of the discussion, that is, to motivate the listener to accept the claim of validity in discussion" (Habermas, 1987, p.37).

Habermas brought a substantial contribution to contemporary society and Public Administration, proposing a rationality based on reason open to dialogue and communicated in a consensual way. However, in the dialogical process, individuals' wills differentiate from the will obtained by consensus and representing the group in the end, to a greater or lesser extent. At this point, we leave here the following reflection, which can be approached theoretically and empirically in future studies: what degree of inequality between the individual will and consensual results is 'acceptable', since complete equality is unlikely? Besides, even though the focus of this essay has fallen onto public administrators, we believe that this theory has the potential to be deeper explored in private organizations, since they are comprised of relations of both the public sphere and the private sphere (Couto & Carrieri, 2017).

Finally, it should be pointed out that this article, although motivated by the search for consensus on the incremental or radical character of Habermas' theory of communicative action, did not, of course, aim at exhausting any other discussion on the subject. The main purpose, therefore, was not the achievement of an absolute and universal consensus, but the promotion of consensual and dialogical practice, 'a consensus that is set as an infinite task, a constant process of its realization' (Dutra, 2005, p. 10). Thus, emboldened by the essence of Habermasian communicative rationality, we dared to raise a good argument.

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