

Social Participation in The Program “Minha Casa, Minha Vida”: Analysis of Municipal Housing Councils¹

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Abstract:

The study analyzes social participation in housing policies through Municipal Housing Councils (MHCs), in legal and practical terms, focusing on the analysis of participation in the Program “Minha Casa, Minha Vida” (PMCMV). The investigation occurred in four municipalities in the Zona da Mata meso-region of the state of Minas Gerais (Brazil), with the assistance of methods such as documentary research, non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The MHCs in the municipalities of Visconde do Rio Branco, Ponte Nova and Viçosa were inactive. However, the MHC of the municipality of Ubá was active. Thus, even though the MHCs are institutionalized channels of social participation, we concluded that their role, especially in the PMCMV, is shifted towards addressing bureaucratic issues.

Keywords: *Social Participation; Social Control; Housing.*

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Participación social en el programa “Minha Casa, Minha Vida”: análisis de consejos municipales de vivienda.

El estudio analiza la participación social en las políticas de vivienda a través de los Consejos Municipales de Vivienda (MHCs), en términos legales y prácticos, centrándose en el análisis de la participación en el Programa “Minha Casa, Minha Vida” (PMCMV). La investigación se realizó en cuatro municipios de la región de la Zona da Mata del estado de Minas Gerais (Brasil), con la ayuda de métodos como la investigación documental, la observación no participante y entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los MHC en los municipios de Visconde do Rio Branco, Ponte Nova y Viçosa estaban inactivos. Sin embargo, el MHC del municipio de Ubá estaba activo. Por lo tanto, a pesar de que los MHC son canales institucionalizados de participación social, concluimos que su papel, especialmente en el PMCMV, se desplaza hacia el tratamiento de problemas burocráticos.

Palabras clave: *Participación social; Control social; Alojamiento.*

1. Introduction

Cities, over time, have become increasingly urban. Recent statistics from the United Nations show that in 1950, 30% of the world's population lived in urban areas (UN, 2014). In 2014, this number jumped to 54%, and the projection is that by 2050, 66% of the population will inhabit cities. Latin America and the Caribbean are the most urbanized regions in the world with 80% of the population living in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2012). In Brazil, the level of urbanization follows the same trend, at 84.4% (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [IBGE], 2010).

It has been perceived that urbanization occurs simultaneously with several adverse effects. On the one hand, there is the growth and development of cities, in terms of infrastructure improvements, socioeconomic aspects and access various types of services and technologies. On the other hand, this expansion – especially when unplanned, particularly in developing countries – is accompanied by problems that affect many cities to a greater or lesser extent.

Thus, the most recurrent urban problems, in view of the accelerated and disorderly expansion of cities, are: spatial segregation and real estate speculation (due to the poor distribution of urban space), shortage and/or lack of housing; growth of peripheral and slums areas which lack infrastructure and employment; the absence of road planning which accentuates the difficulties in mobility and

transit of people and vehicles; and high densification leading to “swelling” cities and the spread of social inequalities (Alvim et al., 2007, Choguill and Choguill, 2008).

This study focuses on housing problems because quality residential settlement is a fundamental condition for guaranteeing and maintaining the basic needs of a society. Although it is a right recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, cities – especially Brazilian ones – coexist with precarious and irregular housing, in addition to the presence of housing deprived individuals.

In Brazil, housing deficit is an indicator that quantifies the immediate and intuitive need to build new housing. In 2014, the deficit estimate was 6,068 million homes, which represents the sum of Brazilians residing in substandard housing and/or family cohabitation, faced with excessive rent burden or densification of residents in rented housing (João Pinheiro Foundation, 2016).

In view of the importance of promoting equal opportunities for citizens, the Brazilian State has created guidelines to subsidize and facilitate access to housing. Since 2009, a public policy has stood out in the national scenario: the Program “Minha Casa, Minha Vida” (PMCMV), whose purpose is “to create mechanisms to encourage the production and acquisition of new housing units or rehabilitation of urban properties and production or renovation of rural dwellings” (Brazil, 2009). In the period 2009-2016, the federal government invested approximately R\$295 billion in the Program, having contracted the construction of 4,219,366 homes (Brazil, 2016). This initiative is considered the greatest public housing policy in Brazil.

The 1988 Federal Constitution of Brazil brings in its framework the incentive of social participation in public policies, institutionalizing and expanding the involvement of society in public decisions. With regard to housing policies, the National Social Interest Housing System (NSIHS, 2005) established the need to create the Municipal Housing Council (MHC) to assist in the deliberation of local issues and the establishment of guidelines for resource allocation of the National Social Interest Housing Fund (NSIHF).

The Municipal Housing Council is an important instrument of social participation for the formulation and implementation of public housing policies at the local level.

Through this participatory institution, it becomes possible to supervise, control and monitor government actions that seek to solve public problems related to housing (or the lack thereof).

Considering the importance of social participation in the scope of housing policies, especially in the PMCMV, which stood out in the Brazilian political-economic scenario, the following research question guided the study: how does social participation in housing policies occur through the MHC, especially in the ambit of the Program “Minha Casa, Minha Vida”?

As a result, the general objective of the study was to analyze how social participation in housing policies occurs through the MHC, in legal and practical terms, taking the PMCMV as a focus. It was sought to specifically understand the MHC and its duties in general and, subsequently, analyze how this participatory institution works within the scope of the PMCMV, identifying the main implications of PMCMV on the local activities of the Council after its implementation.

The investigation occurred in four municipalities of the state of Minas Gerais (Brazil): Viçosa, Ponte Nova, Visconde do Rio Branco and Ubá. These localities present a demographic behavior similar to other Brazilian cities, that is, from the 70s, they received a large number of migrants, which resulted in the accelerated growth of the urban population. This population growth converged to form urban spaces where social inequalities coexist due to problems related to access to work, housing and infrastructures (Santos, 1991).

In its entirety, we subdivided this article into five parts. The first is the introductory section. The second captures aspects of social participation in contemporary Brazil. In the third part, we presented the methodological procedures. Further on, results and discussions. In addition, at the end, general considerations.

2. Social Participation in Contemporary Brazil

The context from which emerged the notion that the actions of the state can be controlled by the society refers mainly to the 80s and 90s, the period in which Military Dictatorship ended, initiating a new state reform in Brazil. What marks this period is re-democratization of the country, which enabled civil society participation, aiming at constructing a public administration model more open to the interests of the population and more efficient in the coordination of the economy and public service (Paes de Paula, 2005).

The milestone in this trajectory was the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which institutionalized social participation in Brazilian public policies. The decentralization of federative power and the opening of dialogue between the State and society have evolved and expanded, thus Brazilian municipalities have gained greater autonomy, especially in relation to local social policies (Avritzer, 2007).

As a result of these changes, Avritzer (2008:45-46) comments that Brazil in the course of the twentieth century has become one of the countries with the greatest number of participatory practices, due to the “differentiated forms of incorporation of citizens and civil society in policy deliberation”. The author calls the spaces where these actions occur as “participatory institutions”, because they involve a set of norms and procedures that structure social and political action of the subjects involved (Lopez and Pires, 2010).

The main participatory institutions in Brazil are the Public Policy Councils, Executive Participatory Plans, Participatory Budgets and Conferences. The focus of this paper was the Municipal Public Policy Councils, the most widespread participatory institutions in the public administration of the country (Carneiro and Brasil, 2014). The councils are institutionalized participation channels that allow the representation of collective interests and the involvement of society in politics through control over governmental action, in the deliberations and in the publicity of state actions (Carneiro, 2007). The local experiences are those that have been more developed to increase the participation of citizens in the decision making process of public policies (Souza, 2001).

In this sense, the councils, as legal spaces of participation, mark a new relationship between the State and society, establishing a new form of public control over governmental action through the monitoring and evaluation of public policies (Carneiro, 2007). Social participation in these institutions is therefore an important tool for the dissemination of good governance practices (Wildhagen and Nascimento, 2014) and strengthening of democratic processes, still under construction in the Brazilian society (Paulo et al., 2016).

Although designed to assist the state in achieving the welfare of society, there are challenges concerning the consolidation of social participation in municipal councils. These challenges permeate situations such as: weak influence of citizens in the decision-making process and limited conditions for the latter, which makes participation only symbolic (Gohn, 2000; 2002); non-interference in the most important decisions and actions (Wildhagen et al., 2014); little acceptance by government agencies (Fedozzi, 2012); predominance of interests of counselors and/or groups with greater influence (personalized decisions); politicians who use this space to legitimize their actions; and the difficulties of citizens in understanding the dynamics of processes (Ramos et al., 2013).

Due to the potential for an increase in democracy and the ambiguities between stated objectives (heterogeneities and asymmetries in the face of participation) that may emerge from these spaces, research on this topic has disseminated and gained importance (Parfitt, 2004; Carneiro, 2007; Kleba et al., 2010 Ramos et al., 2013, Moreira et al., 2014). Therefore, the understanding of aspects such as: (a) the engagement of society in these institutions; (b) the institutional design of the councils and their symbolic aspects; (c) the dichotomy of autonomy/dependence of councils in relation to municipal public management; (d) the importance of accessibility to public information and the content of such information as a potential measure of performance; (e) the implementation of the participation mechanisms; and (f) the infrastructure available to these spaces, are some elements of discussions by Draibe (1998), Tonella (2004), Carneiro (2007), Ramos et al. (2013), Silveira et al. (2014). These aspects are incorporated into this article as variables guiding the empirical research.

In a recent systematic review of Brazilian academic publications regarding social participation, Aguiar and Cunha (2017) verified that the number of studies have increased since 2003, and that there is a concentration of research in the area of health. In this perspective, research on social participation in Municipal Housing Councils is important and necessary to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics surrounding this specific social participation space and its implications on public housing policies.

3. Methodological Procedures

In this section we describe the characteristics of the research; the locations of study and the justifications for the choices are presented; and the detailed operationalization of the investigation process.

3.1. Characterization of the study

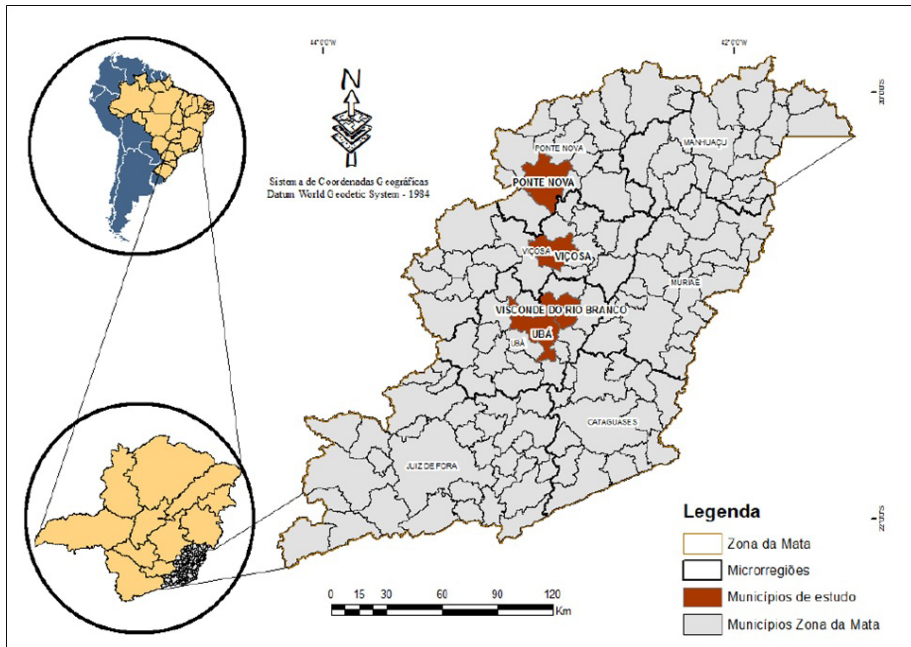
With respect its nature, the research is classified as qualitative, since it sought to observe, record and analyze real interactions among people, and between the people and the systems in which they are inserted (Liebscher, 1998). For scope of the research, the study is descriptive, given the purpose of describing the characteristics of a certain phenomenon or object (Kumar, 2005).

In order to obtain information, we did a documentary research in official documents, research reports and in the legislations that regulate the operation of the MHCs studied. In addition, a field research was carried out, that is, “empirical investigation carried out in the place where a phenomenon occurs or occurred or that has elements to explain it” (Vergara, 2006:45-46). In the field study, the data were collected mainly through semi-structured interviews. In addition, a non-participant observation was done at a meeting of one of the councils studied.

3.2. Study Location

The study occurred in the southeastern region of the state of Minas Gerais (Brazil), in the meso-region called Zona da Mata (Figure 1). Four municipalities were part of the investigation: Viçosa, Ubá, Visconde do Rio Branco and Ponte Nova, thus constituting the locus of the research.

FIGURE 1 – STUDY LOCATIONS



Source: Own elaboration.

We justify the selection of municipalities due to easy access for data collection. In addition to having similar characteristics as to urban space formation (Santos, 1991), these municipalities were contemplated with PMCMV housing complexes (in the 2009-2017 period) and had Municipal Housing Councils established by law (Table 1).

TABLE 1 – INFORMATION ABOUT THE MUNICIPALITIES STUDIED

Municipality	Data on the Program PMCMV		Socioeconomic data			
	House contracted 2009-2017 (Un.)	Total contracted value 2009-2017 (R\$)	Estimated Population 2016 (hab.)	Demographic density 2010 (hab./km ²)	GDP per capita 2014 (R\$)	Human Development Index (HDI) (2010)
Ponte Nova	332	11.899.200,00	60.188	121,94	21.786,99	0,717
Ubá	860	47.279.844,00	112.186	249,16	22.812,20	0,724
Viçosa	335	13.270.686,00	77.863	241,20	17.066,16	0,775
Visconde do Rio Branco	603	34.437.463,00	41.567	155,91	22.862,70	0,709
Total	2.098	106.887.193,00	-	-	-	-

Source: Brazil (2017); IBGE.

Note: €1.00 = R\$3.73 (September/2017).

3.3. Operationalization of Research

The research occurred in three stages. The first consisted of identifying and analyzing the constitution and functioning of the Councils. For this purpose, the municipal legislations on MHCs were used (Chart 1).

CHART 1 – ANALYSIS OF MUNICIPAL LAWS

Municipality	Law	Year
Ponte Nova	Municipal Law nº 3.708	2007
	Municipal Law nº 3.545	2011
Ubá	Municipal Law nº 2.395	1993
	Municipal Law nº 2.999	2000
Viçosa	Municipal Law nº 3.639	2007
	Municipal Law nº 1.922	2008
Visconde do Rio Branco	Municipal Law nº 2.235	2012
	Municipal Law nº 176	1995
	Municipal Law nº935	2008

Source: Own elaboration.

The second stage involved the analysis of the contribution of these spaces to social participation. For this, it was initially intended to collect data through non-participant observation of Council meetings by researchers. However, the Ubá Municipal Housing Council was the only active council at the time of the research and held only one meeting during the data collection period. In this type of observation, the researcher joins the group without interacting with the individuals (Lakatos and Marconi, 1991). The intention was to observe the normal way in which the meetings of the Councils take place. For the systematization of information, a script was adopted to guide the observation and the meeting was recorded and transcribed.

The third, and last stage, comprised the analysis of the perception of the counselor as to the action of MHC in local housing issues before and after the implementation of the PMCMV. Information was collected from semi-structured interviews guided by a script, being the approach in which the researcher gives the informants a series of predetermined but open questions (Ayres, 2008). Members and former members of the Councils were addressed: 03 in Ubá; 02 in Viçosa and 02 in Ponte Nova, in the period of April and May of 2015. These seven interviews were recorded and transcribed.

To process the information, Content Analysis was used, that is, “a set of techniques for communication analysis that uses objective and systematic procedures for content description of messages” (Bardin, 2009:40). For the application of the technique, the steps indicated by Bardin (2009) were adopted: (i) the pre-analysis (of the interviews and all the gathered material); (ii) exploration of the

material (using a categorization technique); and (iii) processing of results, inference and interpretation.

The analytical categories established beforehand and the theoretical-empirical reference that supported the construction of the study, are described in Chart 2.

CHART 2 – ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	REFERENCE
Characterization of the Council	It intends to classify the councils regarding: creation of the MHC; nature of representation; decision-making powers; composition and parity; scope and obligation.	Draibe (1998); Tonella (2004)
Participation and Representativeness	It intends to understand how the council is structured, in terms of the choice of representatives, frequency of meetings and participation, qualification for participation, interests in participating.	Carneiro (2007)
Attribution	Verify the MCH assignments. Know the responsibilities of the. Attributions are defined as: competencies of the council, such as, deliberate, consult, supervise, communicate, provide advice, inform, other tooth.	Carneiro (2007); Silveira et al. (2014); Kleba et al. (2010) e Moreira et al. (2014)
Engagement	To verify the society's commitment to the actions dealt with by the MCH. The engagement was understood by the act of participating, indicating position in the face of the political and social issues dealt with in the MCH.	Draibe (1998); Tonella (2004)
Autonomy	Verify MCH's autonomy before the public administration. It reinforces autonomy in relation to the specific functions of the Council. Adopted concept of autonomy: MCH's competence to manage and conduct its activities, using its own means, wills and / or principles, in accordance with current legislation.	Silveira et al. (2014)

Source: Own elaboration.

To keep the confidentiality of the subjects who participated in the research, we adopted a nomenclature for each subject throughout the text corresponding to C1 to C19, with C1 to C7 referring to the subjects interviewed, and C8 to C19 representing the individuals of the non-participant observation was also interviewed.

4. Results And Discussions

The results and discussion were segmented for each of MHCs studied. In each section, we present the analysis and interpretation of the constitution and functioning of the Council; and the contributions of the MHC to social participation are presented from the observational perspective and the interviewed counselor perspective, aimed at the effects of the creation of the PMCMV on the activities of the council.

4.1. Visconde do Rio Branco Municipal Council

The establishment of the Municipal Housing Council (MHC) in the city of Visconde do Rio Branco occurred on June 9, 1995, through Decree-Law No. 176, which established the constitution of the Municipal Council of Housing of Social Interest and creation of the Municipal Fund, being replaced by Law no. 935 of January 14, 2008. According to the Law in force, the MHC would be normative, consultative, participatory and deliberative, being responsible for monitoring and proposing new housing policies in the municipality. The Council was assigned the responsibility of managing the Municipal for Social Interest Housing Fund (MSIHF), whose function is to manage resources from NSIHF.

The Municipal Housing Council was inactive in the period in which the research was carried out. Moreover, there was no information about former members and there was no access to the minutes of meetings for analysis and verification of the cases handled by the MHC. For these reasons, it was only possible to establish the formal characteristics of this Council.

Thus, according to the local legislation, members should be appointed by executive order, being the responsibility of organizations and entities, the appointment of their representatives. In addition, it was established that the number of members of the public authority could not exceed the number of community members. Thus, according to Draibe (1998:7), the MHC of Visconde do Rio Branco is bipartite and joint since it is made up of the equal government and civil society members. It was stipulated that the term of office of each member would last two years on a voluntary basis. MHC meetings would take place at least once a month, and there may be extraordinary meetings.

For the municipality of Visconde do Rio Branco, only the documentary analysis of the legislation behind the creation of the Council was conducted, since neither was it possible to query the probable reasons for its inactivity and verify the development of the PMCMV in relation to the performance of the participatory institution.

Based on this information, the MHC of Visconde do Rio Branco can be considered a legally established channel to promote the participation of civil society members in the discussion and monitoring of public housing policies, in addition to controlling the actions of the Municipal Public Authority. However, inactivity does not permit vindication of social demands directly with members of the Public Authority (Carneiro, 2007). At this moment, it has abdicated participation and social control.

The analysis of documents of PMCMV drive us for understanding that one the intentions of Federal Government was to introduce, even in a limited way, a form of social participation by means of MHC, although this intention was not effective in this Program how was expected.

4.2. Ponte Nova Municipal Council

The Municipal Housing Council of the city of Ponte Nova was created through Law No. 3.708 of 2007, which deals with the creation of NSIHF and establishes the Management Council. Subsequently, in 2011, Law No. 3545 amended the aforementioned law. As in the case of Visconde do Rio Branco, the Municipal Housing Council of the municipality of Ponte Nova was also inactive at the time of the research. However, it was possible to interview two former members².

As foreseen in the creation law and according to the former counselor C1, the main motivation for the creation of the MHC of Ponte Nova was the fulfillment of the legal requirements of the FNHIS, which determines the creation of the Council in order to manage the resources from the National Fund (Gohn, 2002; Carneiro, 2007). In addition, the MHC had the purpose of deliberating on the Housing Policy of the municipality.

According to Draibe (1998:7), the MHC has a deliberative and regulatory character, being classified as tripartite and joint, as it has in its formation the prediction of members of the Executive, workers, users and service providers. Also in accordance with Law 3.545/2011, it was established that the Council presidency would be the responsibility of the Municipal Secretary of Social Assistance. These aspects show that, at the time of its validity, the MHC had a predominant link with the Local Public Administration.

With regard to participation and representativeness, both ex-counselors (C1 and C2) were indicated to participate in the MHC and remained in office during the two-year term. According to C1, even though his term of office had ended, he continued to participate in mobilizations in an attempt to possibly reactive the MHC.

According to the interviewed counselors, the members did not attend the meetings frequently, which, according to the studies carried out by Carneiro (2007), can reflect the low importance attributed to this channel of participation, both by the civil society and government representatives. Despite the low frequency of the counselors at the meetings, the meetings continued to occur, since the legislation did not establish a minimum quorum required for holding meetings.

According to Law 3.545/2011, it would be incumbent upon the Municipal Secretary of Social Assistance to provide the MHC with the basic conditions for its functioning, which reflects the Council's premier relation of the Municipal

² We interviewed a 55-year-old man and a 28-year-old woman both college graduates and civil servants of the Municipal Council of Ponte Nova. They represented local government in the Council.

Public Administration. In relation to this, C1 comments on the low autonomy of the MHC.

[MHC] has a voice, but it does not have autonomy, because it depends directly on the administration for holding meetings and convocation of members and even the appointment of the President, which according to the Regulation, is linked to the figure of the Secretary of Social Assistance [C1] .

One of the complaints of the counselors was related to the low qualification of the members of the MHC. According to C1, the Council received and forwarded invitations for courses, as from the Ministry of Cities, but the council members did not enroll, which could increase the difficulty faced by the citizens in understanding the dynamics of the processes (Ramos et al., 2013). As argued by Gohn (2002), the qualification of counselors is important so that participation occurs in a qualified way and counselors comprehend the environment in which they are placed, being instructed to supervise and propose actions.

Bringing citizen involvement into the discussion, despite the councils being institutionalized channels of social participation, there were few times that other members of society were interested in participating in the meetings, according to the counselors interviewed. For better explain this situation, one counselor interviewed, the C2, told that the lack of information by the population about these spaces justifies the low participation. Moreover, C1 cites that one of the main reasons for the MHC being inactive is the lack of interest and incentive on the part of the members of the Council in stimulating the population to participate and support the space.

When the counselors were questioned about changes in the role of the MHC after the creation of the PMCMV, they claimed that there were few amendments. Before “Minha Casa, Minha Vida”, the MHC deliberated on other municipal housing programs, such as the construction of local housing complexes, land regularization programs and construction works contracted with resources from the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC)³, besides the concession of building materials.

Under the Program, the MHC was only responsible for creating the criteria for selecting the beneficiaries who would receive the housing, and the halting of

³ PAC is a Brazilian program that articulates public and private infrastructure projects and institutional measures to increase the pace of economic growth. Some of the objectives of PAC are modernizing infrastructure, improving business environment, stimulating credit financing, improving public management and the quality of life of the population (Brazil, 2015).

the activities of the MHC was concomitant to the end of the constructions of the PMCMV in the municipality.

4.3. Viçosa Municipal Council

The Municipal Housing Council of the municipality of Viçosa was created under Law No. 1,922/2008, which established the Municipal Fund for Social Interest Housing and the Management Council of NSIHF. Moreover, as in the cases of Visconde do Rio Branco and Ponte Nova, the MHC of the municipality of Viçosa was inactive at the time of the study. However, it was possible to interview two former counselors.

The creation of the MHC in Viçosa sought to meet the legal requirements for receiving allocations of the FNHIS. In the words of C3: “(...) the municipalities created the Councils to receive resources from the Fund. Meet an obligation of the Ministry of Cities (...)”. However according to C4, besides this possibility in Viçosa, the institution of the Council was formed based on the claims of members of the Housing Association of the municipality that they identified the lack of this council model after verifying the legislation in force in the country.

The MHC of Viçosa, according to the attributes of its constitution, has a deliberative character, although the ex-counselor interviewed also consider it as a monitoring and advisory body. It can also be classified as multiple and non-partisan, because its formation consists of diverse representatives such as government officials, workers, users, employers, service providers and representatives of civil society (Draibe, 1998:7).

Regarding participation and representativeness, both C3 and C4 were appointed by the bodies involved in the Council to serve in the MHC and have been involved since its inception, being a two-year term, which can be extended at the end of the period upon reappointment to remain in the Council.

The entities present at the MHC were not very participative. Nevertheless, the monthly meetings had a sufficient number of counselors and, in a few instances, there was no quorum. In addition, special meetings were held whenever necessary.

As highlighted by C3 and C4, no training was offered nor was qualification required to work at the MHC. Thus, those involved acquired knowledge by studying the subjects being discussed, as well as through discussions with other members who already had experience in a particular subject. For these reasons, the interviewees who are both highly educated, consider that training would be important for the members, that is, their roles should be made explicit “what is the role of the counselor, what is the role of the Council” (C3), as suggested by Gohn (2002).

Although the MHC of the municipality of Viçosa was open to civil participation, it only occurred in meetings where specific groups were invited to participate. The report of C3 corroborates the previous assertion: “(...) I recollect a meeting attended by the representatives of the Neighborhood Associations of Housing Estates (...). It was a huge table, but they were invited and brought the demands of the association (...)”.

Before the Program “Minha Casa, Minha Vida” was implemented in the municipality, MHC was involved in the discussion of the criteria related to local housing policy, such as establishing the criteria for donating construction materials and social rental (for people living in risk areas), as well as acting in the elaboration of the Local Social Interest Housing Plan⁴ (PLHIS).

After the implementation of the PMCMV, in 2011, the other subjects were not priority. After the Program, the main issues discussed at the MHC were: (i) the stages of execution of the three condominiums; (ii) visits to the construction sites of the projects; (iii) establishment of criteria for the selection of families; and (iv) the problems generated after the occupation of the housing complexes. Regarding the latter, interviewee C3 reports that such issues generated disagreements regarding the functions of the Council: “(...) ‘how can the situation of the abandoned houses be solved?’ This problem always appeared. [In addition, this] Is it the responsibility of Council? (...)”.

Although the PMCMV was the most discussed issue at the time, most of the counselors’ proposals were not incorporated into the Program, such as the proposal of the location of the housing projects in the urban space; or technical considerations about the construction of the projects. One of the main criticisms of the counselors was that the decisions regarding the construction of the projects were taken by individuals with little technical knowledge and/or experience about the housing reality of the municipality, disregarding the assistance of the MHC in discussing such issues. Because it did not directly involve MHC in its activities, the work of the council within the scope of the PMCMV was limited to establishing criteria for the realization of visits to housing projects that were being built.

In 2013, there was renewal of the counselors, changes in the municipal Public Administration and the exoneration of the general secretary of the MHC, thus losing its previous dynamics. These facts weakened the Council, which stopped meeting concomitantly after the houses were delivered by the PMCMV.

⁴ The PLHIS is the set of goals and targets, guidelines and instruments of action and intervention for the housing sector. This is the local planning instrument for actions in the housing sector (Brazil, s.d).

4.4. Ubá Municipal Council

In 1993, the municipality of Ubá approved Law No. 2,395, which created the Municipal Housing and Social Welfare Company (EMUBHES) that would be responsible for local housing issues. In order to determine and supervise the actions of this body, the Municipal Housing and Social Welfare Council was also created in the same period. Over the years, the Municipal Social Interest Housing Fund (Law No. 2,999/2000) was instituted, with the objective of financing and guaranteeing the implementation of housing programs and projects, and the MHC would be responsible for its administration.

In 2007, changes were made in the MHC of Uba, directing it towards demands related to housing, including being used to satisfy the requirements of the National System of Housing of Social Interest. Contrary to the other cities studied, where the Council was created due to the legal requirement of the NSIHS, the MHC of Ubá was instituted in the early 90s because at that time the municipality already had projects on social housing through the local public administration.

The MHC of Ubá was the only active council during the period of the study, being considered deliberative, tripartite and joint (Draibe, 1998:7). As in the other MHCs analyzed, the representative institutions appointed the members and they exerted their function under a 2-year term, which could be renewed for the same period. In this regard, it was possible to contact current counselors, and 03 members were interviewed⁵.

The MHC meetings were held monthly, in the Municipal Council hall or at the EMUBHES headquarters, according to the needs of the counselors. When necessary, special meetings were convened to deal with issues such as visits to construction sites or the drafting and/or voting of resolution.

The MHC of Ubá, together with the EMUBHES, operates in several social programs, such as (i) housing projects constructed through projects of the municipal administration, (ii) construction material donation programs, and (iii) the housing assistance program (social rent). Despite the various housing programs, the direct demand of the population is low. In most cases, the demand is related to the donation of basic building materials or housing assistance.

Although MHC of Uba is active, its role in the PMCMV was not different from the councils of the other cities analyzed: the primary responsibility was the creation of the criteria and resolutions that would govern the selection of the beneficiaries. In addition, the MHC extended its participation by monitoring the

⁵ We interviewed 02 men aged 40 years and 35 years, with college degrees. Both are municipal civil servants (they represented local government in the Council). In addition, a 45-year-old woman with a college degree was interviewed; a commissioned employee of the Ubá City Council (represented a local institution in the Council).

construction works through site visits. However, it was not the duty of the Council to choose the place where the projects were to be built or participate in the project, a striking feature of the normative design of the PMCMV (Reis, 2013; Moreira, 2016).

Besides the construction of the houses by the PMCMV, the other municipal housing programs in Ubá caused the counselors to become more active in the MHC, seeking to participate in the meetings and other activities developed. These actions strengthened the Council, further stimulating the creation of new programs that seek to solve the housing problems of the municipality (donation of new or used construction materials and provision of bathrooms in homes without sanitary facilities).

In addition to the interviews, a non-participant observation of an ordinary meeting of the MHC of Ubá was done. The guidelines discussed were: (i) approval of the minutes of the previous meeting; (ii) accountability report of EMUBHES, held quarterly about the main expenses and revenues during the period; without objections on the part of the counselors present; (iii) comments on the visit to the PMCMV project sites in the city; and (iv) approval of resolution 02/2015, which dealt with the prioritization criteria and general guidelines of the new municipal program “Construction Warehouse”⁶. In this case, the observation made possible to verify the discussions of counselors about problems of municipality and the solutions attempted for them. In addition, their discussions was about housing problems in general, not only about the PMCMV. The counselors mentioned about important mechanisms of the housing policy, like “housing deficit”, “housing inadequacy” and local subsidy programs to improve housing infrastructure. In fact, that Program little changed the actions of the Ubá’s CHM.

Although the MHC of Ubá is active, strengthened and with various housing programs, it did not differ from the other councils in stimulating social participation. The population, which is generally unaware of this space, was not present. Thus, only council members who are selected by the entities that comprise the Council, participate, a case similar to the other cities. This limits the participatory institution to a few specific groups (Almeida, 2015).

Finally, it should be emphasized that the functioning of the MHC in Ubá is due to the involvement of its counselors and the help of EMUBHES, which acts as an institutional support for the counselors, contributing to other housing projects developed in the city. Thus, the existence of EMUBHES in the political administrative structure of the municipality of Ubá, signals concern for its local problems and housing needs.

⁶ This is a local program, which was already being discussed in other meetings of the CMH, and was intended to offer construction materials (new or used) to the population facing difficulty to reform and improve their housing. The idea of the warehouse would be to take advantage of a wide space that EMUHES had in its headquarters).

In order to summarize the main characteristics of the four MHCs studied, Chart 3 was elaborated. This illustration highlights the year and the reason for the creation of the Council; its composition and situation; aspects such as frequency, autonomy, training and engagement; besides role before the PMCMV.

CHART 3 – SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MHCS STUDIED

Municipality	Visconde do Rio Branco	Ponte Nova	Viçosa	Ubá
Year of creation	1995	2007	2008	1993
Motive	-	• Compliance with the legal requirements of the NSIHF	• Compliance with the legal requirements of the NSIHF • Demand for local association	• Local demand.
Composition	• 04 representatives of the Executive; • 02 representatives of Popular Movements; • 01 representative of the Rotary Club; • 01 representative of the Masonic Lodge "Fraternidade Rio-branquense".	• 05 representatives of the Municipal Executive; • 02 representatives of the Community Organizations of the Urban area; • 01 representative of the Community Organizations of the Rural area; • 01 representative of the Service Providers; and • 01 representative of the "Conselho Regional de Engenharia, Arquitetura e Agronomia – CREA".	• 01 representative of each of the Secretariats of - Social assistance; - Environment and Urbanism; - Public Works and Services; - Civil defense; • 01 representative of the Institute of Planning of the Municipality of Viçosa; • 01 representative of the Autonomous Water and Sewage Service; • 01 representative of the Union of Rural Workers; • 01 representative of Community Association that operates in the housing area; • 02 representatives of the Municipal Union of Residents Associations of Viçosa; • 01 representative of the Nucleus of Research and Extension of the Federal University of Viçosa; • 01 representative of the NGO "Engenheiros Sem Fronteiras"; • 01 representative of Service Clubs; • 01 representative of the Union of Workers of the Construction and Furniture Industries; • 01 representative of the City Council.	• 01 representative of EMUHBES; • 02 representatives of the Municipal Government, appointed by the mayor; • 01 representative of the City Council; • 02 representatives of concessionaires, public electricity service providers and basic sanitation; • 03 representatives of Resident Associations; • 01 representative of the Society of Engineers, Architects and Agronomists of Ubá and the Regional Council of Engineering, Architecture and Agronomy; • 01 representative of non-profit entities, recognized of municipal public utility, acting in the area of housing of social interest.
Status	• Inactive	• Inactive	• Inactive	• Active
Frequency	-	• Low frequency of members.	• Low involvement of members/members with little participation.	• Involvement of members.
Autonomia	-	• Low autonomy; • Dependence on local government.	• Low autonomy; • Dependence on local government.	• Low autonomy; • Dependence on local government..
Autonomy	-	• Absence of training.	• Absence of training.	• Absence of training.
Engagement	-	• Low engagement; • Low popular participation.	• Low engagement of members; • Low popular participation.	• Engajamento dos membros; • Baixa participação popular.
Acting on the PMCMV	-	• Establishment of selection criteria for beneficiaries.	• Establishment of selection criteria for beneficiaries. • Visits to housing complexes. • Postmortem problems.	• Establishment of selection criteria for beneficiaries. • Visits to housing complexes.

Source: Search results.

5. Final Considerations

The present study analyzes how social participation in housing policies occurs through the Municipal Housing Councils, in legal and practical terms, with the objective of analyzing participation in the Program “Minha Casa, Minha Vida”, the most important Brazilian public housing policy in the past 7 years. The research was carried out in the municipalities of Viçosa, Ponte Nova, Visconde do Rio Branco and Ubá (Minas Gerais/ Brazil).

For the municipality of Visconde do Rio Branco, the Council was inactive and its role in PMCMV was limited to complying with the legislation. The development of the Council in the Program in terms of the performance of the Participatory institution was not effective.

In Ponte Nova and Viçosa, the MHCs were also inactive. The first case was justified by the lack of autonomy coupled with inconsistency between project

proposals and their effective executions. With regard to the second case, the reasons were the lack of access to information and low autonomy from the Municipal Administration and changes in management, which weakened the MHC leading to inactivity

On the other hand, the municipality of Ubá has an active council, which despite its dependency on the local public administration, carries out its projects. Consequently, there is the possibility of reducing the social contrasts caused by the housing problems that the municipality faces.

The general analysis allowed to infer that most of the MHCs were created to meet a legal requirement for allocation of resources from the federal government, the only exception being the municipality of Ubá. The members of the council were appointed by representatives of institutions, established a priori to compose the MHC. The functioning, composition and management of the Council depended on the bureaucratic structure of the local government (legislation and physical conditions), a strategy to maintain the dependency of MHC on the local public management, inhibiting its autonomy. In addition, the counselors lacked training and information on their role and functioning of the participatory institution.

In this sense, the results of the study reinforce conclusions drawn by lines of research focused on social participation in contemporary public administration. The ambiguous results on the performance of these spaces are ratified: on the one hand, it has been identified that MHCs are institutions capable of establishing the link between the government and society; they also enable discussions on local demands, proposal of actions and mobilize various social sectors. On the other hand, the study cases showed a limited involvement of the counselors in the design and execution of the public policies in question; the reports were unanimous about the low participation of citizens and the difficulty of those involved in understanding the dynamics of the processes.

Therefore, though MHCs are institutionalized channels of social participation, we concluded that their duties, especially in the PMCMV, are attending to bureaucratic questions. Thus, the implementation of the PMCMV, a complex and important program, in the cities of the councils studied did not lead to significant changes in the Councils' purposes, functions and discussion contents. In other words, the implementation of the “Minha Casa, Minha Vida” Program in the municipalities in question has not been shown to be a factor in encouraging social participation in MCH. Based on the following facts, it is concluded that there has been no social participation, contrary to the NSIHS's intent behind the establishment of the Municipal Housing Council.

Lastly, these conclusions emphasize the importance of reporting and disseminating experiences related to citizen participation in public policies. Furthermore, lessons and experiences can be drawn from the negative and positive

aspects of social participation, aiming at improving the governance and the quality of policy management, making it more democratic.

6. References

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