

## Social Innovation: Emancipation or More of the Same?

### Inovação Social: Emancipação ou Mais do Mesmo?

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**Abstract:** The article discusses the existing convergences between Social Innovation and Emancipation. A systematic literature review was carried out in order to understand the motivations that lead to Social Innovation. In addition, some concrete cases of innovations in the literature reviewed have been described.

**Keywords:** Social Innovation, Emancipation; Top-Down Innovations; Bottom-up innovations; Hybrid Innovations.

**Resumo:** O artigo abordou as convergências existentes entre os temas Inovação Social e Emancipação. Foi realizada uma revisão sistemática de literatura no intuito de entender as motivações que levam à Inovação Social. Além disso, alguns casos concretos de inovações existentes na literatura foram descritos.

**Palavras-chave:** Inovação Social; Emancipação; Inovações *Top-Down*; Inovações *Bottom-up*; Inovações *híbridas*.

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## Introduction

With the crisis of the Social Welfare State in the 1970s due to the Oil Crisis (KERSTENETZKY, 2012), there was a profusion of initiatives carried out by various social actors in order to minimize the effects of the gradual decrease in the services supplied by the State. Several of these initiatives have shaped what some theorists call “Social Innovation”.

It is interesting to point out that these initiatives, present in several countries, seek to improve the quality of life through initiatives of the government or organized civil society itself, in order to promote new ideas, or, in other words, innovate without necessarily needing large resources.

The objective of this work was to identify in the literature the concepts and typologies of Social Innovation and the possibilities of the concept in order to emancipate people. In a second moment, the intention was to initiate a general discussion between both concepts, presenting some examples, however, without analyzing specific cases. It should be noted that the experiences of Social Innovation are quite different, but they present common elements; these are the elements that were analyzed.

The methodology is based on systematic literature review, looking for scholarly productions approaching Social Innovation and Emancipation. The publications were found through the portals scielo.br and periodicos.capes.gov.br. CAPES is the abbreviation to the Brazilian Coordination of Improvement of Superior Education Personnel. The keywords used in the search were located only in the title, with search only for the exact phrase in order of relevance, with no limitation of the date of publishing. The relevance criteria involves the frequency of the desired words inside the paper and its impact factor. The language field was also modified according to each search in order to filter the lack of accentuation.

To search inside the Brazilian Scielo Portal, the expression “Inovação Social” resulted in a total of 17 papers. In an analogous way, the expressions “*Social Innovation*” (English), “*Innovation Sociale*” (French), “*Innovación Social*” (Spanish) and “*Soziale Innovation*” (German) were searched in CAPES’ Portal of Periodicals. It was performed the advanced search looking for these expressions only inside the title of the papers and only peer-reviewed papers from 2015 onward. The book reviews and events proceedings were excluded from the count. The advanced search returned 636 papers in English, 18 in French, 103 in Spanish and 4 in German.

In the case of emancipation as a theme, it was performed an analogous search inside the same portals. The results were: 82 papers in Portuguese, 1441 papers in English, 54 in French, 249 in Spanish and 29 in German.

To focus the reading in both themes, only theoretical papers that define at least one of the concepts clearly and papers containing detailed descriptions of case studies were maintained. When important texts in books, events, governmental fonts and the like were presented inside the papers, they were pursued in their original source and used in the literature review.

The text was divided into five more parts besides this introduction. In the following section, it is presented the conceptual discussion about Social Innovation, followed by its typology. In the third section, it is presented the understanding of this text about emancipation as a concept to mark the debate of the following section. Section four presents the argument about the emancipatory potential of Social Innovation, followed by the final considerations.

## Social Innovation: a conceptual perspective

For Bouchard (2012, p. 50), Social Innovation is “an intervention initiated by social actors to pursue an aspiration, respond to specific needs, offer a solution or take advantage of a situation in order to change social relations, transform a context for action or propose new cultural orientations”.

Whyte (1982), in turn, considers that innovation is determined by the context in which it is effective. This means that what is innovation in a precarious context may constitute traditional practices in other contexts of high HDI (Human Development Index).

In the view of Assogba (2007), innovations occur in response to various social problems, such as social exclusion, poverty, school dropout, etc. Barczak (2012), on the other hand, believes that these innovations can also contribute to solve public health and environmental problems. Ezponda and Malillos (2011) complement pointing out possibilities in the area of education and employment generation. Bouchard (2012) adds as minorities at risk the elderly, single parents and young unemployed.

This collection of minorities and social problems makes Latin America and other developing regions the most fertile *loci* for the development and implementation of Social Innovations. Dowbor (2009) points out that Latin America has the total income concentrated in 10% of its population. The author also points out that 38% of the world’s population is in China and India, which brings Social Innovations on a large scale in these countries to greater representativeness at the global level.

According to Cooperrider and Pasmore (1991) and Cloutier (2003), the first to use the expression “Social Innovation” was Taylor (1970), to designate “new ways of doing things in order to respond to social needs” (p. 70). However, Moulaert (2009) points out that classical works by Weber and Durkheim proposed similar concepts to address similar phenomena.

For example, Durkheim (1977 [1893]) sought to establish in the positivist fashion, in vogue at the time, what were the causes and consequences of the social division of labor. In this line of reasoning, the author outlined a line of “social evolution” (p. 276) in which individuals organized in society were progressively better adapted to the surrounding environment in order to optimize their chances of survival. In this way, Social Innovation would consist of the adaptations of individuals in society to the environment.

On the other hand, Weber (1999 [1922]) proposed a “Theory of Innovation” (p. 321) to explain how innovations occur within the Theory of Social Action proposed by him in the same work. The author argues that innovations at the social level occur in response to the occurrence of external events, being promoted by individuals with great empathy and charisma. These individuals would have the ability to inspire others in their community to act due to personal identification with this leader.

Cloutier (2003) also points out that the idea of Social Innovation is also present in the Sociotechnical School, proposed by Eric Trist in the 1960s, at the Tavistock Institute in London. Trist (1990) considers that in addition to the sociotechnical approach, whose focus is the personal fulfillment of the individual at work, Tavistock scholars have also contributed with innovations in the non-hierarchical design of organizational structures (socioecological approach).

In addition, Moulaert (2008) say that crises can both trigger and accelerate the processes of Social Innovation.

According to Ezponda and Malillo (2011), these processes are studied mainly by institutes of Social Innovation located in several countries, for example: Canada (*Center for Research on Social Innovations* – CRISES in French); UK (*Young Foundation, National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts* - THIS), Australia (*The Australian Center For Social Innovation* - Tacs), New Zealand (*New Zealand Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Research Center* - SIERC), Finland (*Helsinki Design Lab*), Sweden (*Forum for Social Innovation*) and Austria (*Center for Social Innovation* - ZSI).

Lévesque (2002), in turn, brings together the contributions in Social Innovation that occurred throughout the 20th century:

**1968-1975** : petty-bourgeois movements in refusal of consumption and mass production. Criticism of monotonous work and authoritarian forms of supervision. Promotion of self-management. Many activists have left social movements to become academic researchers in search of answers to social questions.

**1975-1985** : The crisis of the Social Welfare State in the 1970s led to the organization of local initiatives such as community clinics, community nurseries and community financing initiatives.

**1990-2000** : forms of Social Innovation are carried out by various actors (civil society, NGOs, indigenous peoples, feminist groups, among others). Reconfigurations of power between countries and continents, as well as between regional and local authorities. Redefining roles between organizations and civil society. Redefining organizational objectives in social and economic terms.

These innovations contradict traditional innovation mechanisms, which aim to maximize profit at the expense of improvements in society at large. Gutiérrez (2008) points out that traditional forms of innovation occur mainly in the economic and technological sphere, using cost reduction strategies, quality control, diversification of production lines and improvement of customer satisfaction techniques. According to most authors of Social Innovation, this focus on technological and economic innovation emerged with Schumpeter (1982 [1934]). In the view of Lacerda and Ferrarini (2013), Schumpeter's theory on innovation was influenced by Marshall, Keynes and Marx.

Bouchard (2006), however, argues that older classical authors have already addressed innovation from the traditional point of view: Smith (2003 [1838]), seeing innovation as a source of increased productivity; Ricardo (2003 [1838]) sees pay and employment as innovations in various contexts, such as colonies; and Marx (1983 [1939] - posthumous work) arguing that innovations occur through crises throughout the development of economic cycles.

Social Innovation (SI) can be differentiated from Traditional Innovation (TI) through the evaluation criteria of success in implementation. According to Lundström and Zhou (2011), Social Innovations are assessed by observing improvements in human and social development measures, while those of a traditional nature are measured by increases in profit margin and share of market share. These authors point out that SI organizations grow at a slower pace than TI organizations. However, they present, on the other hand, greater resilience.

In the view of Lundström and Zhou (2011), the critical resources for the growth of TI organizations, as one would expect, are financial. In the case of SI organizations, they additionally include political recognition (contacts), volunteer work, and philanthropic commitment (donations). In the line of reasoning of Lévesque (2002), it can be argued that the forms of obtaining resources of both types of organization do not divide in a so disjunctive manner, due to the repositioning of sectors and social actors that occurred in the decade of 1990.

In addition to the previous contributions, Lacerda and Ferrarini (2013) present differences in the forms of participation of the actors in SI and TI. In TI, the processes are mostly centralized and hierarchical. In SI, there is necessarily participation of the community as a form of empowerment.

**Table 1** - Differences between Traditional Innovation and Social Innovation

Topic	Social Innovation	Traditional Innovation
Goal	Very common	Economic
Resources	Political, voluntary and financial	Financial
Success	Improvement in Human and Social Development	Improvement in profit margin and / or market share
Feature	More resilient	Faster
Participation of the actors	Community Participation / Empowerment	Hierarchy and centralization

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Marulanda and Tancredi (2010) and Rodríguez *et al* (2011), ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) reports that the following factors are important for SI success:

1. Community participation in the different stages of the project;
2. Alliances with government sectors;
3. Alliances with larger NGOs, at national or international level;
4. Synergy between traditional / ancestral and technical / modern knowledge;
5. Appropriation of innovation by the community;
6. Individual leadership, internal or external to the community;
7. Competitiveness of the organization and the product offered by it;
8. Integration with production chains.

From item 6 of this list, one can perceive the importance of social entrepreneurs in the implementation of SI. Maclean *et al* (2012) argue that both Social Innovations and Social Entrepreneurs are oriented towards the creation of social value.

In this line of reasoning, several SI scholars presented some characteristics present in the leaders of Social Innovation processes, that is, Social Entrepreneurs (SE). For example, Biggs *et al* (2010) consider that a social entrepreneur is able to recognize a social problem and use entrepreneurial principles to organize, create and manage an initiative in order to produce social change.

Jing and Gong (2012, p. 238), in turn, argue that this entrepreneur should:

- a. adopt a mission to create and maintain social value;
- b. recognize and seek new opportunities to serve that mission;
- c. engage in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation and learning;
- d. act boldly without being limited by resources at hand;
- e. show high transparency for beneficiaries by the results created.

In addition, Rodríguez and Guzman (2013) emphasize the need for this entrepreneur to be someone with human capital, high schooling, skills and knowledge acquired in work experiences.

In addition to the cited characteristics, Assogba (2010) and Rivers *et al* (2015) emphasize the importance of empathy and non-judgment as qualities of this entrepreneur.

Ikeda and Matsumaru (2012) also put in terms of SE social skills the ability to influence people to act.

One can see in these characteristics that there is an emphasis on the individual's role of solving social problems. Several authors (eg. BRUNSTEIN *et al*, 2008; ALONSO; RODRÍGUEZ, 2011; MACLEAN *et al*, 2012) perceive in this type of discourse an overload in these roles, so that civil society solves the problems that should be faced at the governmental level.

In cases of Social Innovations implemented by firms, as a form of Social Responsibility, it is argued that there is an exploration of the creative capacity of SI of the workers of these organizations in order to generate profit for the firms, by improving their image before society. Alonso and Rodríguez (2011) consider, however, that in these cases a cognitive dissonance is created in the workers, because when they propose Social Innovations that can modify structurally the organization of the firm, those are discarded.

On the other hand, Doi and Yamada (2011) present an example of Social Innovations that can be used to better exploit workers. In the case of these authors, they propose a system of productivity control of scientific researchers, by means of measuring variables such as movement in the laboratory, level of heart rate, quantity of files accessed, works read, etc.

This last type of Social Innovation can be framed in the trap exposed by Dagnino (2003). The author demonstrates that there is a current discourse on the importance of innovation and competitiveness, which leads to the importation of exogenous development models in an uncritical way. Ramos (1996 [1965]) considers that it is possible to import foreign practices, conditioned to a criterious and multidisciplinary evaluation and adaptation, studying what practices are fit to the context and what are not.

In this sense, it can be argued that the adaptation of good practices from high HDI contexts and that require few material resources can generate Social Innovations in low HDI contexts. However, it is necessary to look at social, ideological, and other differences that exist in order to minimize adverse cultural effects resulting from this transposition of practices, according to Ramos (*op. cit.*).

In summary, from the collaborations cited, Social Innovation can be defined as an action of social actors to respond to social needs through the transformation of context and social relations. In this context emerges the social entrepreneur who, in addition to empathy, combines elements of entrepreneurship in a perspective of transparency and not judgment. This social entrepreneur seeks the SI and not the TI, being based on the search for the common good. There are also criticisms regarding the role of the state and the actions of social responsibility that seek, in addition to the results of SI, those of TI.

In the following section typologies for Social Innovation are presented.

### **Social Innovation: Typologies**

The typologies of Bouchard (2012) and Manzini (2014) are presented in this section. While in the first case the typology refers to the concept of Social Innovation, in the second case the division is given by the source of the actions.

According to Bouchard (2012) the studies on Social Innovation are divided into two strands: one that considers Social Innovation (SI) as functional and another as radical. In the functional aspect, social problems are addressed via SI; in the radical, the social relations that generated these problems are transformed via SI.

This means that, in the functional aspect, Social Innovation aims to fill gaps in terms of public services that are not being provided by the State. It is not questioned whether the State should improve this offer or not. The focus is on solving emerging social problems. Examples of actions in this area may be palliative programs that involve improvements in health care, safety, among others, which mainly address social problems as symptoms.

On the other hand, on the radical side, Social Innovation is understood as the medium that leads to the transformation of society, in order to prevent the emergence of said emerging social problems. Examples of actions in this area would be programs for training and income generation, in the area of education, sanitation, among others that address the causes of social problems.

In Manzini's view (2014), the initiative of Social Innovation can take place in three ways: *Top-Down*, *Bottom-Up* or *Hybrid*. The following sections provide examples of these three types of Social Innovation.

### Examples of Top-Down Social Innovations

*Top-Down* Social Innovations come about through government initiatives, large-scale NGOs or through corporate social responsibility projects. Table 2 presents gives some examples of this type of SI.

**Table 2 - Top-Down Social Innovations**

Social Innovation	Responsible Organization	Focus	Source
Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee	Poverty reduction; improvement of basic living conditions (access to water, basic sanitation, etc.)	Mahmuda et al (2014)
Vocational Training Centers	Government of Estonia	Teacher training through the merger of urban schools with rural schools.	Ümarik et al (2014)
Hangar	City Hall of Barcelona	Promotion of the arts	D'Ovidio and Pradel (2013)
Psichiatria Democratica	Collective of psychiatrists, sociologists and social workers led by Franco Basaglia	Anti-manicomial movement in Italy	Manzini (2014)
Slow Food	NGO founded by Carlo Petrini	Improvement of food access and preparation conditions; protection of food biodiversity	Manzini (2014)

to be continued

conclusion

Social Innovation	Responsible Organization	Focus	Source
Contracting of private services	Chinese government	Provision of public services in the area of education and health through hiring of NGOs and the like	Teets (2012)
Grameen Bank	Muhammad Yunus	Poverty reduction; microcredit for the low-income population in Bangladesh	Yunus (1997)
Project One	Northeastern Union for Assistance to Small Organizations	Poverty reduction; microcredit for the low-income population in Recife	Tometch et al (2013)
Pearl Bank	Alessandra France	Poverty reduction; microcredit for the low-income population in Sorocaba	Tometch et al (2013)
Laboratory of Social Innovation	Italian bank Intesa Sanpaolo	Social Responsibility in the Banking Sector	Altuna et al (2015)
Community planning in Quito	Government of Quito, Ecuador	Participatory planning	Gierhake and Jardón (2015)
Community wind power	Japanese Government	Promotion of social participation in sustainable energy generation projects	Maruyama et al (2007)
Building Hope	US Agency for International Development together with ETP Slovakia	Protection of refugees in Slovakia	Garcia and Haddock (2015)

Source: elaborated by the authors.

It can be seen, as brought before by the literature review speaking about SI in general, that most Top-Down SI are aimed at social problems. Following there are examples of *Bottom-Up* Social Innovations.

### Examples of Bottom-up Social Innovations

*Bottom-Up* Social Innovations are mainly through NGOs, OSCIPs or other civil society actors who have organized themselves to solve problems or propose alternatives to local practices. Table 3 below presents some examples of this type of SI.

**Table 3 - Bottom-up Social Innovations**

Social Innovation	Responsible	Focus	Source
Related searches	Comedians from Fortaleza-CE	Cultural initiatives in the area of Humor outside theaters.	Correia-Lima <i>et al</i> (2015)
Environmental Protection to the Timmins Reserve, Canada	NGO Friends of the Greenbelt and local indigenous	Protection against environmental reserves against mining firm.	McCarthy <i>et al</i> (2014a, 2014b)
Isola della Moda	Collective of the Milan Fashion Industry, Italy	Promotion of new actors in the segment, focusing on ethical ways of producing and advertising in fashion.	D'Ovidio and Pradel (2013)
Green Guerrillas	Local residents in New York	Occupation of vacant lots with gardens; afforestation of the city	Manzini (2014)
Food safety in China	Residents and farmers of Liuzhou, Guangxi (China)	Promotion of organic agriculture	Manzini (2014)
Car Sharing	Residents in Germany	Sharing cars as a way to reduce traffic overcrowding	Gillwald (1997)
Platform of Mortgage Victims	Residents in Spain	Support Movement for the Homeless	Garcia and Haddock (2015)
Herrgårdens woman society	Islamic immigrants in Sweden together with Medea Living Labs, University of Malmö, Sweden.	Stimulus to Entrepreneurship by Iraqi and Afghan Immigrant Women	Hillgren <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Dementia Friendship Club	Dementia, family, and friends living in Australia	Carrier support and autonomy support in daily life	Igarashi and Okada (2015)
Social agriculture in Catalonia	Residents in Catalonia	Occupation of persons at risk of social exclusion in the area of agriculture	González <i>et al</i> (2014)
firms recovered by their workers	Recovered firms workers in Argentina	Recovery of firms that are bankrupt by their workers	Trincherro (2009)

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Again, it can be seen, as brought before by the literature review speaking about SI in general, that most Bottom-up SI are also aimed at social problems. Examples of Hybrid Social Innovations are presented in the following section.

### Examples of Hybrid Social Innovations

*Hybrid Social Innovations* generally start in a *Top-Down* or *Bottom-Up* manner, but have received funding from other sources such as governments or global funding, such as the World

Bank and other related organizations. Manzini (2014) argues that these inputs are needed primarily in the expansion phase of Social Innovations out of their original context.

Table 4 below lists some examples of this type of SI.

**Table 4** - Hybrid Social Innovations.

Social Innovation	Responsible Organization	Focus	Source
Bank Palmas	Association of Residents of Conjunto Palmeira	Poverty reduction; microcredit for the low-income population in Fortaleza	Silva Jr. (2004)
Municipal sponsorship of philanthropy	Shanghai City Hall	Promotion to NGOs	Jing and Gong (2012)
Association for Quality of Life Care Vila-real Project	NGOs in conjunction with the Government of Valencia, Spain	Local Development	Edwards-Schachter <i>et al.</i> (2012)

Source: elaborated by the authors.

The concern with social problems is also present in this category. More generally, it can be seen that in all three types of Social Innovation, no matter where the initiative starts from, it is necessary to spread innovation at the local level. In this sense, it can be seen that it is not enough that the idea is innovative; the community needs to participate in its implementation.

In the following section the concept of emancipation adopted in this work is presented.

## Emancipation

The emancipation can not be considered as a static state of the human being, because there is not a clear criterion to distinguish between emancipated and not emancipated people. Emancipation is a constant (re)construction of the way of perceiving ourselves in the world, approaching an ideal Weberian type. In other words, emancipation is a north where one wants to arrive, but one was always be along the path, in some cases further away and in others “almost there”.

As ideas that gave way to the concept of emancipation, Susen (2015) attributes the most influential approaches to the following thinkers: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Georg W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), and Karl Marx (1818–1883). Rousseau (2011 [1755]) considers both property and social inequality byproducts of the bourgeois revolution, not being, therefore, unavoidable and natural facts. Kant (2003 [1785]) understands the categorical imperative as unconditional moral principles that are justified as ends in themselves. In Kant’s view (1996 [1784]), humans can liberate themselves from self-interest and villainy following the categorical imperatives. He called this process as enlightenment, when men leaves the condition of nonage, meaning the lack of ability to use one’s own understanding.

Hegel (1977 [1807]), on the other hand, sees humans not only as cognitive entities, but as entities that establish social relations based on mutual recognition. In the author’s thought, self-liberation from historically specific forms of domination can only occur inside these processes of socialization. Marx (2000 [1844], in a complementary way, thinks that there are two types of

work: alienated and emancipated. In the alienated one, the individual works to satisfy other's needs. In the emancipated version, he works towards his own needs.

In more detail, Marx (1992 [1843], p. 228) defends that “political emancipation is at the same time the dissolution of the old society on which there rested the power of the sovereign, the political system as estranged from the people.” The old society in this context is the feudal society, where people's affairs were separated from the sovereign's affairs. In this kind of society, people see themselves as estranged from power because of the cited separation of affairs.

Another trait of this old kind of society is the importance of religion in the State's affairs. In this text about the Jewish question, he explains that the political emancipation occurs when the State liberates itself from religion, but continues to exploit people. The opposite process, human emancipation, occurs when man sees himself no longer as separated from society, he can appropriate the society's forces in order to emancipate people collectively (MARX, 1992 [1843]). In the human emancipation, men individually free themselves from religion, becoming able to see their alienation from work and to intervene collectively against their exploitation.

About the French Revolution in 1789, Marx (1992 [1843]) said that bourgeois class rose in rebellion because it wanted to participate in the country's government. In this context, “emancipation meant the removal of the control of public affairs, the high civic, military and religious functions from the hands of the privileged classes who had a monopoly of these functions.” (p. 411). There was a milder version of this movement in the 1990's decade, when the civil society started to work out solutions for its own problems with the rise of the third sector and social control organizations (SALAMON, 1994).

In line with Marx's vision, Del Roio (2007) defends that the emancipation can only be brought by the self-activity of masses, from their autonomy and cision with the dominant class. This activity starts with the the daily contradictions experienced by the subaltern classes. These events generate the rebellions and promote the development of organic intellectuals, which emerge from the subaltern classes or from higher classes' people that sympathize with the subaltern causes.

In the vision of Almeida (2017), seeing emancipation in the light of Critical Social Psychology, Emancipation is the process of realization of the human subject referring to the changes that occur in the way individuals see themselves and perceive themselves in the world, as well as the adoption of new identities that change the meaning of the relationships experienced by individuals. In her view, it also refers to the construction of new meanings for the existence and overcoming restrictive personal and social conditions for the individual's self-determination. The author thinks that the conditions for emancipation are not only in the individual, being necessary rethink collectively the conditions for democratization in the social life. These conditions involve the access to material resources, the promotion of cultural diversity and visibility among other requisites.

In a similar way, Almeida (2017) understands autonomy as the process of becoming “another other that is also ourselves” (p. 4), starting from personal desires and projects, overcoming an old identity that reifies us. In this way, it cannot be misperceived as the exaggeration of self-importance, not respecting the precepts of sociability. In this way, Almeida (*op. Cit*) thinks that what differentiates Critical Social Psychology and the mainstream one is precisely the concept of emancipation, in opposition to the mainstream one: adaptation. This way, she argues that the emancipation idea cannot be taken for granted, being necessary to define it conceptually.

In terms of organizational theory, Alvesson and Willmott (1992, p. 432) understand emancipation as “process through which individuals and groups become freed from repressive social and ideological conditions, in particular those that place socially unnecessary restrictions upon the development and articulation of human consciousness”. In this specific context, emancipation is seen as the resources that people mobilize to challenge managerial domination (HUAULT; PERRET; SPICER, 2014). One of the strategies presented by the authors is to make the demands seen by the most powerful people inside the organization, making them understand that the problems affect them as well as the subordinate people in the organization.

Also concerned with power issues, Allen (2015), in a postmodern way, states that emancipation involves transforming a state of domination in a unstable field of power relations within which freedom may be practiced. In this sense, she defends that the individual has to be able to exert autonomy using three main postcolonial criteria: reflexivity, pluralization and decentering. This means respectively: (1) taking distance from one’s own beliefs; (2) understand other’s beliefs and (3) differentiate objective, inter-subjective and subjective beliefs.

For Habermas (2005), emancipation expresses an special type of auto-experience in which processes of auto-understanding converge in a gain in terms of autonomy. In another moment, Habermas (1983) sees autonomy as an effort to define the values and moral principles that have validity and application, independently of the authority of groups or people that support them, not mattering if the individual identifies himself or not with these groups.

According to Chauí (2011, p. 304, emphasis ours) “autonomy, from the Greek *autós* (itself) and *nomós* (law, rule, norm), is the internal capacity to give oneself its own law or rule and, in this position of the law-rule, put himself as *subject*”. In a similar way, Emancipation is the break with subalternity and the refusal to manipulate others (NOGUEIRA, 2011).

Perhaps the 1969 preface [of Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Clarification*] authorizes us to say that the work of the Frankfurters can be understood as an energetic and decisive call to think what to do to unite theory with practice, to achieve the reconciliation of man with nature, and of operational and emancipatory rationality (SGRÓ, 2007, pp. 89-90).

The utilitarian/functional ratio of a one-dimensional teleological character (RAMOS, 1981) is hegemonic in the Western world (and perhaps Eastern, even to a lesser extent). This hegemony can be understood as an obstacle to emancipation (RAMOS, 1981; MARX, ENGELS, 2004; BOX, 2005; SGRÓ, 2007 and TRAGTENBERG, 2005). Santos (2010: 241) states that “[...] the period of liberal capitalism is one in which the liquidation of the emancipatory potential of modernity is brutally manifested.” On the other hand, “it is not realistic to think that all social behavior is conceived as strategic, and can be explained as the result of an egocentric calculation of possible advantages” (HABERMAS, 2003, p. 66).

One can often feel that there is nothing to be done about a given reality, by its own strength and omnipresence. However, Critical Theory thinks differently, for “if thought is not limited to recording and classifying categories in the most neutral way possible, that is, if it is not restricted to the indispensable categories, to the *praxis* of life in given forms, a resistance arises immediately” (HORKHEIMER, 1991[1937], p. 61), both of the wealthy, who do not want to leave this condition, and of the dominant theoreticians, who feel threatened. One of the accusations is that thinking is “too theoretical” (HORKHEIMER, 1991[1937]).

For Marcuse (1979 [1964]) this is the behavior of the “One-Dimensional Man” whose meaning is attributed by the author himself “who has lost the notion of contradictions. “ In the words of the author,

Thus a pattern of *one-dimensional thinking and behavior* emerges in which the ideas, aspirations, and goals that by their content transcend the established universe of word and action are repelled or reduced to terms of this universe (MARCUS, 1979, p. 32).

According to Marcuse (1979[1964], p. 28), “all liberation depends on the consciousness of servitude and the emergence of this consciousness is always impeded by the predominance of needs and satisfactions that have become, to a great extent, of the individual himself.” This meaning approaches what Freire (2001) calls the culture of silence.

Another component of this construction is that liberation (from someone’s guardianship) can not occur individually (PAES-DE-PAULA, 2008), union and solidarity are conditions to emancipate collectively (MARX; ENGELS, 2004), because “before emancipating others we must emancipate ourselves” (MARX, 2005). Emancipation is an internal process (MARX, 2005; MARX; ENGELS, 2005). Habermas (2003) and Freire (2001) argue that emancipation can take place in the wake of democratization processes, but can not be produced through external interventions.

Only when the real individual man recovers within himself the abstract citizen and becomes, as an individual man, to be generic, in his individual work and in his individual relations, only when man has recognized and organized his ‘*forces propres*’ as social forces and when, therefore, it no longer separates itself from social force in the form of political force, only then does human emancipation take place (MARX, 2005, p. 42).

In a similar way, inspired by the ideas of Derrida, Heidegger and other continental European intellectuals, the philosopher Jacques Rancière (2010) discusses emancipation in order to provide a praxis that faces emancipation both as a means and an end. In the author’s view, one must start from the point of view that all human beings were given equal intelligence. It is up to the facilitator of the emancipation process, like the *ignorant master* Joseph Jacotot, portrayed in Rancière (2010), to show to the subject the strength of the emancipated person’s own intelligence, placing himself equal to the subjects in question.

In addition, Panagia and Rancière (2000) considers that emancipation takes place in two types of moments: the intervals and the interruptions. In the philosopher’s view, intervals are the times when the individual is not working in favor of the market. In these moments, such as breaks for meals and rest periods at work, the individual can emancipate himself by making contact with emancipatory experiences and contents, which enable him to achieve his personal or professional fulfillment in a more satisfactory way for himself.

Interruptions, on the other hand, are moments like marches, standard operations, strikes, and other similar collective protest movements that drive the market agents to become aware of their dependence and equality to their component workers. In Panagia and Rancière’s view (2000), it is only possible for a boss to give an order to a subordinate and be obeyed because of the reciprocal commensurability and intelligibility that exist in the language and behavior of both. This original human equality must, in the view of the author, be constantly practiced by all in its process of emancipation in order to effectively realize the equality of rights and means of sustainability for all.

Based on the author's own principle (RANCIÈRE, 2010) that original equality can only be realized in practice through freedom of action, one can complement Rancière's vision through the ideas on emancipation of Amartya Sen. Sen (2000) considers that the main drivers of development are freedom and education. Comparing different nations and regions of India, the author concluded that those with the largest number of inhabitants with higher levels of education and who are under democratic regimes are the ones with the greatest development.

In the author's view, democratic regimes provide freedom of action, so that the inhabitants can exercise their income-generating and survival skills to counter collectively adverse economic or social situations. As Rancière (2010) considers that equality is both a means and an end in itself, Sen (2000) considers that freedom also has these two characteristics. He regards as basic the following freedoms for human agency, which can be considered as facilitating conditions for emancipation:

- Political freedom: it provides citizens with the voice to denounce situations of social vulnerability in a non-authoritarian social environment and assists in the distribution of income in a country through social projects and individual entrepreneurship;
- Transitional and market liberties: freedom to work, to receive from their own work and to exchange intellectual, financial and goods and services exchanges;
- Social opportunities: mainly provided by universal access to basic education;
- Reduction in fertility in a non-coercive way: universal access to basic education provides reduction in fertility without state coercive intervention, which leads to greater female participation in public life and economic activities.

From these different perspectives on emancipation, one can understand that man emancipates himself when he perceives himself as an individual potentially equal to others, with his individual potentialities (*forces propres*) as the motor of social forces; finally, when one perceives himself as a political being and free to act in society in favor of a common good.

In the following section it is presented the discussion about the emancipatory potential of Social Innovation.

### **Social Innovation: the way for Emancipation?**

The discussion that is presented here has an exploratory character and intends to list elements for future work in order to deepen the discussions about the overflow potentials of SI in the sense of effective and permanent change of the communities where it happens. This analysis took place around the concept of emancipation, presented previously. There is no intention of exhausting the theme and even that would not be possible in this space. However, the notes made here intend, besides starting the discussion, to present possible ways for its continuity.

SI emerges as a response to the social needs / problems of a particular community. For this, it is necessary to change, both the context and the social relations. In this sense, emancipation is moving in the same direction, that is, the change of context and relationships. This is the first possible approximation as the other approaches unfold.

However, one must first identify the origin of SI; if it comes from "outside" (*top-down*), if it is imposed (even with the best of intentions), its emancipatory potential tends to be diminished, since emancipation can not come from outside, based on external interventions, as seen in the literature review about Emancipation. Actions in this sense have a strong propensity to have the

duration of the intervention itself, which usually is not a long term one. In other words, at the end of the stimulus, it returns to the starting point. This stimulus can be a public policy, an action, or even a government initiative based on Social Responsibility, usually from large organizations.

Relative to this placement, it may be that this initial stimulus is necessary for the beginning of an SI hybridization process, which can begin as *top-down* and expand through the empowerment of the local community, but there is no guarantee of this unfolding. In this way we can classify which *top-down* initiatives have a low emancipatory potential.

On the other hand, *bottom-up SIs* seem more interesting, at least *a priori*. That initiatives start from the society itself that seeks, on their own (or with foreign aid, but from its own initiative) change through new ways. The possibility of emancipation in these cases tends to be greater than in the previous situation, since the endogenous stimulus has a more latent potential for change, since it can already be considered as a SI itself.

On the other hand, the *bottom-up* SI may be more ephemeral than the *top-down* precisely by the financial *background*, logistics, communication, etc. These initiatives can present serious problems of continuity especially if they are punctual and without the support of a good part of the community. It is important to note that, although their emancipatory potential is greater than the *top-down SIs*, they can “die from starvation” because objective reality may weaken the volunteer perspective or even the idea may not “take off” because of resources of different natures. In this way, we can classify *bottom-up* initiatives with a medium emancipatory potential, *a priori*.

Including other variables in this argument, in both cases the great differential was the capacity for resilience that may already exist in the community, added to that which can be added by the SI process (of both types). Resilience may be the key to success, so one can think of measuring the emancipatory potential of SI from the resilience building / growth capacity in the community. Of course, resilience is not the only variable but one of the central variables. We can then conclude that the resilience capacity of the community is proportional to the emancipatory potential of SI.

Another variable of similar weight is the social entrepreneur (SE). The figure of leadership in this process can play an ambiguous role, because if emancipation is to “free oneself from someone’s tutelage”, simple exchange of guardianship does not mean emancipation. The profile of the social entrepreneur should be attributed by the potential to stimulate / inhibit emancipation in a given community.

The importance of leadership is undeniable. However, it is important that empowering communities and their respective emancipation gradually make the role of the social entrepreneur less important, causing their performance to diminish in intensity over time. In this sense, the profile of this entrepreneur must be observed. Would he be wishing to play a secondary role in the medium and long term? Or even more directly, what are the interests of this entrepreneur in the SI process? Going a little further, what does he expect as a result of SI actions in the community?

The objective is not to judge the character of the social entrepreneur, but rather to understand its role, which is extremely relevant, in the short / medium / long term in the SI process. If the SI is *top-down* this social entrepreneur may be in the service of the state or a firm (Social Responsibility). On the other hand, its leadership can “emerge” from the external initiative, which even demonstrates the emancipatory potential of this SI, even being *top-down*. If SI is *bottom-up* he is probably an integral part of the initiative, or adhered to it when he first met. These situations must be evaluated and perceived when trying to understand the emancipatory potential of an SI.

The other typology presented is the division into: functional SI (F-SI) or radical SI (R-SI). The central difference is related to the SI approach. While in F-SI SI is used as a reformative approach to social problems, in R-SI SI is used to “transform” the roots of social relations that have generated these problems.

It is notorious (by the nomenclature itself) that R-SI has a deeper and structural conception of change, because it acts on social relations. In this way, its emancipatory potential tends to be more intense than in the F-SI. The F-SI also has emancipatory potential, but it is understood to be less strong because what changes is only the “how to do”, that is, the approach to the social problem, while in R-SI there is also the “Why do”.

In this way, it can be constructed, even provisionally, given the exploratory character of this work, an ideal profile for the SI to expand its emancipatory potential. The SI must move in the *bottom-up direction*, working to increase community resilience through the transformation of social relationships (R-SI). The social entrepreneur(s) involved must be from the community itself and seek the division of responsibilities and the emancipation of the community as a whole, making him(her, them) temporary leader(s).

Another way is initially implementing the F-SI, with a direct and effective participation of the community. This initiative can transform the community to a position of increasing resilience, with or without SE. It's possible to conduct the initial F-SI in an hybrid version, and maybe in a resilient and self sustainable experience of SI closer to bottom-up direction. In this case, the role of SE is the same, being a temporary leader and a reference for the process, but not the responsible for it.

This is an initial exercise for understanding the emancipatory potential of SI in communities; other approaches can and should be attempted to widen this path. In the following section the final considerations are presented.

## **Final considerations**

The objective of this article was to identify in the literature the concepts and typologies of Social Innovation and Emancipation. Subsequently, it was started, in an exploratory way, a discussion about the emancipatory potential of Social Innovation processes.

It is also important to highlight the typologies of SI and their differences in relation to traditional innovation. As a result of the work, an ideal SI was presented, given the typologies presented and their respective emancipatory potential. In addition, a desirable profile for the Social Entrepreneur in the SI process was also presented.

As a suggestion for future works, prospective researchers can try to identify in SI experiences what their profile is and try to understand (via field research) if there were signs of an increase in emancipation in the community. It is a difficult task, but quite fruitful. The accumulation of studies in this sense can corroborate or not with the results of this work, or even propose other variables to be considered in this process.

Another suggestion would be to identify the profile of the social entrepreneur (SE) and try to perceive in the field his emancipatory potential. Here too a series of studies is needed for more conclusive results.

In addition, in line with the reasoning of Brunstein *et al* (2008), Alonso and Rodríguez (2011) and Maclean *et al* (2012), it is necessary to have in mind what characteristics are really necessary

for social entrepreneurs, since the publications of the area list practically as many virtues as the human virtues. This makes it virtually impossible to adopt a focus for the improvement of social entrepreneurs who lead the Social Innovations.

As limitations of this work, the main one is perhaps not conducting field research itself. On the other hand, the option of not studying one or more “cases” can make this first approximation useful for new studies in different places and situations. Another limitation is the objective choice of the variables to be analyzed based on the typologies presented and also the not exhaustive treatment of the concept of emancipation.

At the end of this text, the invitation is to expand studies in the field, seeking more empirical data to put this agenda to test in order to improve it or even change it radically if appropriate.

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