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**SOCIETY AND PARTICIPATION: FOR A DEMOCRACY TOWARDS  
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

***SOCIEDADE E PARTICIPAÇÃO: POR UMA DEMOCRACIA RUMO À  
PROBLEMÁTICA AMBIENTAL***

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**ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** this study deals with the latent environmental problems presenting the democratic possibility as the instrument for environmental issues resolution. This paper seeks to investigate the actions of the citizen in making decisions regarding



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environmental issues and how the absence of manifestation on the part of the people can cause serious damage to the environment.

**Methodology:** from the bibliographical and documentary research by analytical method, a better understanding of the situation will be sought as a plausible solution.

**Results:** the conception of participatory democracy exercised within the community and within the local space can become an effective means of demarcating the current environmental problems in modernity, allowing the individual citizen to participate in decision-making concerning the ecological problem.

**Contributions:** the discussion on how to inspire citizens to participate in local affairs and how to develop a political interest that is focused on environmental issues, bringing them closer to the important decisions that will establish social, political, economic progress and especially that focused on the environment.

**Keywords:** Democracy; Participatory Democracy; Environment; Environmental problems; Citizen.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** O presente estudo trabalha com a problemática ambiental latente apresentando a possibilidade democrática como instrumento de resolução das questões ambientais. Este artigo busca investigar as ações do cidadão na tomada de decisões sobre questões ambientais e como a ausência de manifestação por parte das pessoas pode causar sérios danos ao meio ambiente.

**Metodologia:** a partir da pesquisa bibliográfica e documental e por intermédio do método analítico buscar-se-á uma compreensão melhor da situação bem como uma solução plausível.

**Resultados:** a concepção de democracia participativa exercitada no âmbito da comunidade e no seio do espaço local pode transformar-se em um meio efetivo de deslinde dos problemas ambientais vigentes na modernidade, permitindo-se que o indivíduo cidadão participe na tomada de decisões referentes à problemática ecológica.

**Contribuições:** a discussão sobre como inspirar os cidadãos a participar em assuntos locais e como desenvolver um interesse político focado em questões ambientais, aproximando-os das importantes decisões que estabelecerão progressos sociais, políticos, econômicos e, principalmente, voltados para o meio ambiente.



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**Palavras-chave:** Democracia; Democracia participativa; Meio ambiente; Problemas ambientais; Cidadão.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to investigate the actions of the citizen in making decisions regarding environmental issues and how the absence of manifestation on the part of the people can cause serious damage to the environment.

The idea of participatory democracy is approached with regard to the introduction of the public in the management of environmental problems of local interest, as well as the main problems related to the environment that are experienced in an everyday fashion by the nation. The ways to include citizens in environmental decisions are pointed and also the ways in which participatory democracy can be realized, as well as the instruments to which it joins in the delineation of current and complex environmental issues.

It shows the influence of the principle of subsidiarity and the ideas that it proclaims regarding the involvement of each individual in relation to the local problematic and his duty to supervise the performance of the State and also to work together with him in matters of the local sphere.

The message of citizen sovereignty and the exercise of its citizenship through participatory democracy and the need for dialogue and interaction on the part of the citizen are also strengthened, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

It is analyzed the alienation of the population, regarding the exercise of citizenship based on participatory democracy, and which tools to use to incorporate more and more citizens in the exercise of public policies and social dialogue.

Finally, we discuss how to inspire citizens to participate in local affairs and how to develop a political interest that is focused on environmental issues, bringing them closer to the important decisions that will establish social, political, economic progress and especially that focused on the environment.



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The method used is the analytical, having bibliographical references related to the participation of the Brazilian citizen in the local space in what refers to environmental issues.

## **2 ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM: BETWEEN ADVANCE AND BACKWARDS**

The advancement of technology has contributed much to the well-being of society, facilitating, and enabling the daily activities of each citizen, but the new and destructive ways of using the natural resources available on our planet have contributed to the degradation of environmental assets. There are countless losses caused by globalization and hyper consumption in a capitalist society where the risks of inconsequential consumption are not recognized.

The unbridled and stealth exploitation of natural wealth and goods tends to trigger an ecological imbalance, degrading ecosystems and creating an environmental disorder that will eventually reach the whole global community if there are no measures that try to reverse this situation, measures that can come from the citizen themselves.

There are a number of environmental issues that can be discussed and there are numerous problems affecting the environment, and they are certainly worthy of further study in their problematization and complex resolution. (HOLSTON, 2008, p. 21ss)

We cannot talk about environmental issues without first analyzing water resources and their use by human beings, be it agriculture and irrigation, basic sanitation and supply and pollution by industries and other consumers, no matter what the reason, water will always occupy a prominent place in the discussion of environmental issues. (POWER; ZUCCO, 2012, p. 10.)

The problem of water and its management is closely linked to the wide urbanization and over-industrialization of our planet, as with the increase of the



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population and the global industry, the environment and water are directly affected by the high pollution from growing agriculture and livestock, waste from industries, lack of basic sanitation and poor management of refuse, and other refuses. (WAMPLER; AVRITZER, 2005, p. 12ss.)

The issue of water is regulated in Brazil by several normative provisions, firstly it is possible to mention the Decree n. 24.643 of July 10, 1934, which inaugurated the Water Code, said legislation characterized what were public, common and private waters, and also laid down provisions on the use of water, ports, shipping, springs, groundwater and rainwater.

The norm referred to established rules for the use of hydraulic power and its respective use, as well as regulated the hydroelectric industry by introducing protective requirements that must be satisfied for a possible use of hydroelectric power, and as stated in the Decree "all hydroelectric power plants will be met with precautionary requirements of general interests ". (BRAZIL, 1934).

It is also possible to mention Decree-Law n. 7.841 of August 8, 1945, which established the Code of Mineral Waters, conceptualizing water sources and differentiating them from common waters, being those with "chemical composition or physical or physical- chemical properties other than common water, with characteristics that give them a medicinal action ". (BRAZIL, 1945). The standard brought the chemical classification of different types of waters, also establishing guidelines for the exploration of mineral waters.

There is also Law n. 9,433 of January 8, 1997, which instituted the National Water Resources Policy, said law created the National Water Resources Management System that coordinates the integrated water management, arbitrates administratively conflicts related to water resources, implements the National Water Resources Policy, plans, regulates and controls the use, preservation and recovery of water resources, and ultimately promotes the charging for use of water resources.

The legal instrument established the objectives of ensuring to the current and future generations the necessary water availability, in quality standards suitable to their respective uses, to use water resources in a rational and integrated manner,



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including waterborne transport, with a view to sustainable development, establish "prevention and defense against critical hydrological events of natural origin or arising from inappropriate use of natural resources". (BRAZIL, 1997).

Another major problem that plagues our society is the issue of garbage and the pollution it causes to the environment, the drama has been and continues to be much debated by scholars, having its greater approach in the fact of how and where garbage should be destined, including the solid and non-solid wastes. The totality of the problems generates uncertainties in a world where hyper consumption prevails and credit facilitation enables the satisfaction of consumer desires, great problem being the destination of the numerous wastes and debris produced in an excessive manner. The issue in Brazil is dealt with by some legal instruments, it is possible to mention Law No. 11,445 of January 5, 2007, which established guidelines at the national level for the issue of basic sanitation.

This standard conceptualized what basic sanitation was, water supply, urban cleaning, and solid waste management, as well as clearly characterized what was the sanitary sewage, being considered the "activities, infrastructures and operational facilities of collection, transportation, treatment and final disposal of sanitary sewers, from building to their final release into the environment." (BRAZIL, 2007). In this way, the adduced diploma dealt with the issues of garbage collection, sewage and its disposal, solid waste management and the way of providing basic sanitation services.

Another important document that can be mentioned is the one that regulates the issue of solid waste, Law No. 12,305 of August 2, 2010, which instituted the National Solid Waste Policy, it includes important instruments to enable progress and evolution in confronting the principal environmental and social problems arising from the inadequate management of solid waste. The law establishes the shared responsibility of waste generators from manufacturers and importers, through distributors and traders until they reach citizens and holders of solid waste management services.



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The law aims at preventing and reducing waste generation, based on the practice of sustainable consumption habits, increasing recycling and reuse of solid waste and proper environmental designation of waste, contributing to "reduce the generation of solid waste, waste of materials, pollution and environmental damage." (BRAZIL, 2010). Thus, creating important goals for the elimination of landfills and dumps, establishing planning instruments to solve their problems.

Another major problem that remains under discussion is the issue of deforestation, the destruction and excessive and unbridled extraction of plant species with the purpose of expanding agriculture and livestock, developing logging industry and making possible the increasing urbanization, being these factors great contributors to the extinction of Brazilian biomes, leading to the degradation of forest ecosystems.

In Brazil, Law No. 12,651 of May 25, 2012, which established the Forest Code, regulated the issue of protection of native vegetation by establishing measures to "prevent the continuation of environmental damage, provide for the regeneration of the environment and render feasibility for the recovery of the degraded area". (BRAZIL, 2012).

The issue of deforestation is mainly concerned in relation to the effects and consequences in a global level, causing disasters and natural phenomena that affect humanity, especially those from global warming.

This is one of the main corollaries of deforestation, which tends to accelerate the process of desertification in various parts of the planet, as well as contributing to an irreversible collapse of biodiversity, culminating in the imbalance of entire ecosystems, generating negative impacts of a calamitous nature, which should definitely be avoided in any way possible.

It should be taken into consideration that deforestation has as its main product the degradation of the environment, harming the ecosystems and causing damages that are sometimes irreparable, especially with regard to the misfortunes caused to the fauna and flora and the consequent loss of genetic and biological diversity. Thus, deforestation constitutes another environmental issue of extreme



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importance that demands the action and interest of the local community, leading to, in the case of lack of interest of the community, a potentializing of damages to the natural environment.

In addition, it should be mentioned that animal rights, with the issue of ill-treatment and all violations of the rights guaranteed to individuals, as well as all kinds of crimes against fauna and also the decreasing and extinction of animal species, caused either by poaching or by destruction of ecosystems.

All this configures yet another important environmental issue that needs to be discussed in the current times, the violation of animal rights, the right to be preserved, protected and guarded by the State and the citizens together.

Law No. 9,605 of February 12, 1998, which deals with environmental crimes, established in its article 32 that a person who "practices acts of abuse, mistreatment, injury or maiming wild, domestic or domesticated animals, native or exotic" (BRAZIL, 1998) will incur the penalty of detention of three months to a year and a fine, thus bringing significant contributions to the accountability of offenders.

As such, it is possible to clearly visualize the weight that a normative provision has to curb the harmful practices to the environment, being certain that a norm is an instrument of great value for the protection of the environment and of all its members.

The subject is of great importance for the local community, as there having no preservation of the entities that make up a certain ecosystem, the environment will begin to suffer, causing an ecological imbalance that will affect all citizens.

It should be mentioned that, regarding to fauna, the Federal Constitution itself establishes in its article 225 that it is prohibited any "practices that jeopardize their ecological function, cause extinction of species or subject animals to cruelty" (BRAZIL, 1988), constituting therefore a constitutional guarantee to the ecologically balanced environment, being incumbent of the Public Power and mainly of the citizens the preservation and protection of the living beings.

Adede y Castro, on the basis of their interpretation, affirms that, as far as the constitutional protection of animals is concerned, it is not enough for the Charter to





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refer to life, ecosystems and species on a number of occasions, the constitutional legislator, in section VII, said specifically about the protection of the fauna and closed any practice that causes the extinction of species or subjects the animals to cruelty. (2006, p.38).

Finally, it can be said that the cause of animals is also another legitimate environmental issue that has attracted the attention of the global community and its rulers, being necessary an effective action of the State and citizens, as subjects of rights and duties that they are, to act together seeking a true guardianship of the rights of the animals and their protection.

However, it should be mentioned that innumerable other problems are affecting the environment, which are also surrounded by complexities that are peculiar to it and inherent to each case in a very peculiar way, being summarized here only a few of the most common and those most easily found in the daily life of each citizen. (JÄNICKE, 1996, p. 72ff).

Likewise, it is necessary to declare that the community, and each individual citizen, has the capacity and powers to be interested in, interact and act on environmental causes through the suitable and other forms laid down in the Constitution., and that the community may use the relevant instruments to protect the environmental good in the forms that are exposed in the course of this text.

### **3 ALIENATIONS, CITIZEN AND DEMOCRACY: TOWARDS EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION**

The citizen's alienation constitutes a great obstacle to the outcome of environmental issues. The further the citizen is from the resolution of environmental issues, residing in a incapability state to stand for a critical and independent contemplation and not being assure that is also generative in society and politics, more the environment will deal with misfortunes commonly imposed to it.



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It is about a fictional commodity where each person covers yourself from local reality by diverting from an effective participation in the local community progress and in the development of the environmental issue, knowing that, posteriorly, the omitted community will suffer by the absence of its own participation, suffering the losses due to negligence in environmental protection.

The considerable problem is that men do not recognize themselves as truly authors in political and social life with their institutions, not being able to see themselves, as crucial agents to the necessary changes to all society in permanent evolution.

Although, men portray themselves as beings full of free will, completely free, able to change their individual lives by the time and manner they want to, besides their alienation due to social topics.

As individual and lonely beings, they do not succeed to understand that they institute the society as a whole group, and they are responsible for the loss or negligence in imposing critical ideas and contemplations, not contributing nicely to the pacific harmony between the local community and the ecosystems.

The isolation of the citizen results in several damages to the environment, where an effective interaction would benefit the ecosystems, not only in the locals where the citizens are but also it would contribute to a wide development of this society, due to the development of other areas, thanks to a fruitful participation.

The main stimulator for the popular participation in social matters is, undoubtedly the democracy, it is a political system where the power is executed by the people's mediation, as for example through universal suffrage, being primarily a government regime where important political decisions are tied to the people, who can elect their representatives through the vote.

Democracy consists of a government regime whose basic premises are the protection of human freedom and human rights, considered as fundamental, as well as freedom of expression and freedom of religious belief, as well as the viability of individuals who are part of participatory society in the political, social, environmental and economic life of the nation (LAKE, 1996, p. 163).



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In it the people enjoy from the expressed rights which are assured, as well as the duties of participating in the national political system which protects freedom and rights. The democracy becomes a crucial instrument to build freedom and equality, rights that are assured by a democratic State, contributing, thereby, to a good society progress, without them the society will find itself surrounded by several social and environmental matters.

Facing what was said, there is need to mention a new phase from democracy, the participatory democracy, a new instrument to approach the citizens even more to the decisions, extremely necessary to a great political and social development.

The society, by its individuals will be able to practice with autonomy all prerogatives which were assured, knowing that the democracy cannot be defined through a central principle, it is not a way for the society to exist as a whole, but it need crucially the autonomy from political society and fulfills a mediator role between the State and civil society in a way that the first condition from democracy is the recognition of the civil society. (LEUTCHUK, 2006, p. 94-5).

Being assured the rights to interfere in the progress of society, the citizen can, through the inclusive instrument of participative democracy, interfere in environmental matters from any topic or disposition.

There are several ways of exercising participatory democracy that will be addressed later in the work, but what can already be elucidated is that citizens will be able to avail themselves of tools that are useful in making decisions related to the environmental issue, occurring a decentralization of environmental issues of state power into the hands of the local community, so that decentralization is an instrument that favors the establishment of Democracy, although its identification is not only due to this regime. Decentralization, by preventing the concentration of power in the hands of a single body, serves as a mechanism of checks and balances, limiting power. Decentralization may also be used as a technique to give greater power to one's own power. Both possibilities are relevant to Democracy (OLIVEIRA, 2002, p. 85).



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In view of what was explained it could be verified that by empowering the actions of initiative of the population it will inevitably promote democracy. In relation to democracy, it can be divided into three modalities: direct democracy, where the people express their mind through a direct vote in each particular subject; there is also representative democracy where people express their mind through election of representatives who will make decisions on behalf of those who have elected them; and finally, there is a semi-right democracy, where people elect their representatives, while at the same time interfering in government by carrying out certain activities.

It is possible to mention a new perspective, the participatory democracy, the democracy that advocates the awakening of people to the interests of the environment in which they live, giving individuals the opportunity of cooperation with the government for the yearnings of society.

It should not be said that participatory democracy takes the place of the representative form, since the idea of participation proclaims the inclusion of the author-citizen in the social, political, and especially environmental discussions, participating in the departments of the State and public policies leading to social justice, not excluding representativeness but consolidating citizenship (LI; REUVENY, 2006, p. 937).

It should be added that the importance of participatory democracy is evidenced mainly by the fact that coverage and quality of public services are broadened, thus reducing the great social inequalities. Participatory democracy can organize and mobilize the local population to participate more intensively in matters of local interest, exposing their ideas and exercising social control with a political action of society that goes beyond the initial prelude of voting.

Participatory democracy is demonstrated through various instruments, such as universal suffrage, plebiscite, referendum, and popular initiative. Universal suffrage is understood as the right to vote assured to all eligible individuals; plebiscite is the consultation of the people to decide on matters of relevance to the nation by convening prior to the creation of the legislative or administrative act that deals with the subject, where citizens are responsible to reject or ratify the proposal; yet in the



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referendum the convocation is subsequent to the act that initiated the proposal, it is up to the people to decide.

In the popular initiative, the people have the power to propose a bill for the legislative process, and it may or may not be discussed and voted upon, taking into consideration that popular initiative will only be applicable in ordinary and complementary laws, not being possible in cases of constitutional amendment projects.

In addition to these institutes determined by article 14 of the Federal Constitution, there are other measures that can be used by citizens to protect the environment, as other examples to be mentioned: the public hearings, the River Basin Committees that are composed, besides the state entities, of users of the waters of the respective area of activity of the Committee.

Another instrument is the Participatory Budget, a governmental mechanism of participative nature that allows the citizens to influence or even decide on the public budgets, as those related to the investments of the city halls, in that sense Boaventura de Sousa Santos says that the Participative Budget is the manifestation of an emerging public sphere, to which citizens and community organizations, on one hand, and municipal government, on the other hand, converge with each other. Such convergence occurs through a political contract through which this mutual autonomy becomes mutually relative autonomy. The experience of the participatory budget is therefore a model of co-management, that is, a model of political power sharing through a network of democratic institutions oriented towards decisions by deliberation, consensus and commitment (2002, p. 526).

It can be emphasized that in addition to participatory budgets there are also the Municipal Councils, which discusses issues related to society such as health and environment. In these Councils there is a popular participation in public management, enabling society to participate in the management of public policies locations.

Thus, the idea of participatory democracy by decentralizing decision-making power from the hands of the State by transmitting the task, even if not completely, to



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individuals in the local community, will allow a better management of environmental issues.

A good example is the study on water management where current models of water resources management have been aided by decentralization and the participation of society and users as an instrument for improving the management of these resources. The domain over water remains with the State, which is decentralized is the management of resources. Such a measure will, consequently, favor the participation of society and users. With these measures, in the adoption of these instruments, as we have already mentioned throughout the work, we will have a change of focus. They leave the decisions of the system to be taken only by the State Bodies to be built in the river basins, through multiple and decentralized deliberations, with the participation of public and private institutions, users and communities. (OLIVEIRA, 2002, p.139).

In this sense, it is clear the perception that, in some ways, the transmission of certain demands by the government to citizen, who is closer to the environmental realities. The resolution of the problem is given with much more dedication, because it is the individual who in a personal and common way shares and experiences each environmental issue, for example from an open sewage that needs channeling or even periodic repairs on trees located in a square or on any public road. (WALKER, 1999, p. 263)

It does not matter what the environmental demand is, but the participation of people as subject of rights and duties that represent is essential for the full exercise of a true democracy. In addition, the important role of the principle of subsidiarity in discussing environmental issues can be highlighted, and it is proposed that the discussion of the issues that involve society should be as close as possible to the individuals who experience them, being at the same level of community, capable of carrying out the activities that are necessary to fully solve environmental questions.

The principle of subsidiarity intends to present local democracy as an element of resolution of social and environmental issues, bringing an idea of citizen's sovereignty towards society and government, being considered, in a general way, the



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supremacy of society over the State, having in fact a redefinition and redistribution of powers by which powers are exercised in the least possible way of the citizen.

On this path, it says that subsidiarity as a principle by which decisions, legislative or administrative, should be taken at the lowest possible political level, that is, by those who are as close as possible to the decisions that are defined, carried out and executed. (BARACHO, 1996, p. 92).

It should also be mentioned that in the construction of participatory democracy, the principle of subsidiarity finds a wide space in which decisions should be taken by the instance closest to the problem.

With regard to this theme, the closer proximity to decision-making centers to society, the construction of participatory democracy takes a position of real debate, and the decisions made by that body are respected and enforced. When we invoke the principle of subsidiarity in order to hold what decisions must be taken by the local court, that argument cannot be used to reverse that order, when the State use that principle to decide on behalf of the "national will" in detriment of local interest. (MENEZES, 2006, p.78).

It is also possible to gradually apply the perception of participatory democracy to citizens to become aware of the power of conflict resolution and environmental issues that are at their disposal. (BATTERBURY; FORSYTH; THOMSON, 1997, p. 126ss)

The principle of subsidiarity aims at reducing the distance between decision-making centers and citizens, both individually and the community as a whole, for the exercise of a citizenship under construction, and this can only be achieved through participatory democracy.

The exercise of this principle represents the core of participatory democracy, with the main premise being the introduction of the population in matters of public order through this decentralization, acting in a way that complements the governmental action to solve, once and for all, those problems that emerge at the local level, they refer to any environmental cause, where subsidiarity can be seen under two focuses in their understanding: the first gives a connotation of secondary



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idea and the second, an idea of suppleness, absorbing two meanings: complementarity and supplementarily. Therefore, decentralization should occur through the application of the principle of subsidiarity, delegating competence to the federated entity closest to the fact, that is, privileging local interest. This time, if the federation was understood by this logic, it would be, juridically and socially, more suited to the purpose for which it is proposed. (MENEZES, 2006, p.53).

The bringing up idea of subsidiarity seeks to encourage citizenship through the insertion of the community in the outcome of the environmental constants that appear in the various localities of Brazil, a country of continental dimensions and holder of a multitude of natural riches and beauties.

It is clear that by stimulating citizenship, through participatory democracy, the resolution of problems, which are becoming more frequent and relevant, will be more accessible and easier for the entities that integrate the social, political, economic, and the environment, and can thus use the faculties and resources available through a democracy based on the principle of subsidiarity and political inclusion.

#### **4 PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACIES: APPROACHING THE CITIZEN TO THE DECISIONS**

As previously seen, the citizen's interaction towards the decision is very important to the citizenship exercise, the approach of individuals from the decision centrals will contribute for the citizenship exercise, the insertion of the citizen in political, social and mainly environmental matters depends on two fundamental factors: the publicity and the mobilization.

The publicity consists in the act of inform, give knowledge to the individuals from colleges, rights and power which are granted for the resolution of social and environmental issues, often the citizen does not know the prerogatives and guarantees which are assured, and by not been aware of the issue end up not participating in topics evolving the local community.





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This informatization of the citizen can be easily solved by using local media, regional newspapers, local radio and in higher levels through television stations which are a long-range tool to divulgate the information.

By this, becoming aware of what they are able to do, citizens will be able to influence local decisions, gaining a voice and decision-making power to solve the anxieties that affect individuals, and their participation, whether in a public audience, participatory budget, municipal councils or even in river basin committees, will be a significant means for the dissolution of the problems faced in the environmental field, remaining as a model for the other problems in different areas.

Another step to be taken is the mobilization matter, the population needs to be motivated by public beings e by the own society, to become aware of the citizenship exercise, and this dawn will only be possible through a real advert, not like in sales, but in a way to make people aware of their rights and duties due to the environment and society.

This mobilization will only have a satisfactory temper when more and more people become engaged in the proposals, considering the ones already established, and the ones yet to come, of his own authorship, being necessary the divulgation od the developed ideas in order to have commotion, signing a union in the community by committed meetings where environmental matters will be discussed. It is necessary to happen, in a way, the literacy of the community to the importance of taking part and contributing in environmental matters, it is crucial to show all how the instruments in participative democracy indeed work.

Lectures, meetings and seminars must be opened to the community, even in an informal way, to divulgate to the people how the popular participation is matured. It should be shown to individuals, who are most often lay, as do public hearings and as should be the participation of citizens.

It is also a task, to relate the results which come from the omission or effective action from the citizens in solving environmental matters, illustrating how participative budgets work and their importance, and also the topic of the river basin committees and the need of attendance from people who use that water.



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It is also suitable to teach about the city councils and its magnitude to the resolution of environmental matters and basic sanitation, about its reach level, what they discuss and approve, pointing out how important the community is for this to contribute to environmental and citizen protection.

This is all extremely worth for the practice of a participative democracy, the citizen must understand that by attending the decision centrals he is not only collaborating to develop his citizenship but also a social control, illustrating that the population has a great role, but is crucial that everyone cooperate with all the commitments from this participation.

The decisions taken by the citizens will be beneficial not only to the gradual eradication of local environmental problems but also to the promotion and development of the culture, because a country where its affiliates effective participate in great decisions, as well as those in minor relevance, will be a nation more culturally favorable.

The citizens who take a standard to participate in the resolution of environmental conflicts will act as supporters in Brazil's government, collaborating to the society improvement and the nation progress. The democracy has had a fundamental role in the revolution of environmentalist thoughts and movements, because through it the population reached the possibility of deliberation on their claims in the environmental area (KECH, 1995, p. 410).

The environment, due to its undeniable fundamental matter, has gained prominence in our modern world and discussions on environmental issues have taken on great proportions by virtue of the democracy granted to all citizens who wish to participate in environmental management and argue it (MIDLARSKY, 1998, p. 350).

Therefore, the environmental matters became able to bigger discussion and reflection, having as its main feasible the democracy, mainly the one in participative field, which through rules that facilitated popular participation, such as our Federal Constitution, thus enabled the State to take initial initiative as a representative of the people, and later following the example of popular action.



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According to Édis Milaré the initial role of government is based on constitutional tutelage, the educational process related to the environment acquires a transcendental dimension, since it is associated with the purposes of the State as a representation of society itself as a result of a social pact. This corresponds to the imperative to rethink deeply the national life according to the dynamism and the peculiar needs of the same society (MILARÉ, 2014, p.190).

The obligation to discuss environmental issues already begins, as demonstrated above, as an initial vocation of the State, but through subsidiarity and participation, the resolution of the questions of a purely state-based action goes to the hands of the citizen, giving to understand an idea of sovereignty of the individual in the face of the government, always having as its initial premise its proximity to the situation and its best possibility of solving the issues of local interest.

It can be said, undoubtedly, even though the charge to discuss and resolve environmental problems is of the Public Power this responsibility can be transferred to the citizens who are less further to the problem, this way the local situations can be solved much more efficiently (MURPHREE, 1995, p. 10).

The fact that democracy brings citizens closer to public life and leads them to a greater exercise of citizenship contributes in a significant way to the evolution and development of society and the protection of the environment in the face of development. It is indisputable the need to establish standards of sustainable occupation that will ensure the legal protection essential to the preservation or conservation of certain spaces, occupied or not by man, but of essential importance to guarantee an ecologically balanced environment for present and future generations, as they provide relevant environmental services and vital to the planet earth itself. Environmental stewardship is undoubtedly a consolidated topic of scientific discussion. What we need to ensure is how to do it efficiently and effectively. (RECH, 2011, p.09).

It is necessary to unveil the eyes of the citizen to the faculties opportunized for the exercise of democracy that will exalt the people, due to its fundamental character in the participatory democracy, acting in order to manage the environment



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in which it is inserted. In this respect the renowned writer and philosopher Bobbio states in his work that all decisions and more generally the acts of rulers should be known by the sovereign people has always been considered one of the axes of the democratic regime, defined as the direct government of the people or controlled by the people (and how could it be controlled if it was hidden?). Even when the ideal of direct democracy was abandoned as anachronistic, the public character of power, understood as not secret, as open to the "public," remained as one of the fundamental criteria for distinguishing the constitutional state from the absolute state and thus to signal the birth or rebirth of public power in public. (1997, p.87).

In this way, Bobbio's teachings mean that every state act must be known to the people when it is not decided by it, so that citizens can participate in government and the management of environmental issues, always being present, of course, subsidiarity and its participatory character, leading the population along the paths of democracy.

Mentioning participative democracy, we bring to mind a matter of political participation and social solidarity where the individuals, through awareness of environmental problems and a mobilization, assume a position towards the local problems and participate effectively and determinately in the management of the environment. Otfried Höffe, Philosophy professor of University of Tübingen in Germany, taught us that the participative democracies in the current world are the result of a long evolving process, a civilization process which has been supported by well-intentioned institutions, such as guilds and clarified constitutions, and also through well-intentioned civics virtues. In an ideal case, the democracy becomes a plebiscite, repeated every day. The opposite concept would be the "do not count on me" attitude (2005, p.132).

This evolving process from civilization and citizenship provided us the interaction of the individuals in the local space to participate, contributing, in this way, to the democracy evolution. The participative democracy, as illustrated before, can be manifested through several instruments, noticing that, they are responsible for making feasible for the citizens the realization of an effective participation, allowing to



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the individuals that they communicate more, articulating plans and projects to benefit the local space and the environment (SCHULTZ; CROCKETT, 1990, p. 54).

Finally, it can be declared that there are appropriated and convenient possibilities to each environmental demand, concerning to the people taking the initiative and enjoy the rights and prerogatives which are assured for the fundamental and necessary assignment of participative democracy.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

It is possible to conclude that the citizen participation in the outcome of local environmental matters is crucial to the citizenship exercise, being the participative democracy the main instrument to enable the population participation.

The citizens when included in the decisions from local interest will be able to contribute to the evolution and development of the society and culture, there being a social interaction and articulations about environmental problems it will be possible to disseminate the good with common interest, contributing to the resolution of the society's problems.

It can be observed that advertising the need of social participation, informing the individuals about their rights and duties to the society and stimulating the public to engage into environmental matters, by this mobilization the citizens become aware of pertinent topics, undoubtedly, we will reach all the conquests related to the environmental harvest, and we will be able to go beyond, the idea of participative democracy, as a positive consequence, will be extended to the other areas in society, economy, health, education, culture and leisure.

In this way, participatory democracy focused on local space is one of the most effective ways to solve environmental problems, since the populations involved can deliberate on the issue and know that their decisions will be respected. Thereby, the feeling of belonging to the local space becomes stronger allowing the citizens directly interested to know the questions and be able to find the solution. The active participation of reasonable and rational people allows a sense of community in



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different social groups. Thus, it is necessary to listen to the population in an equal and fair way, for this it is necessary alternatives, such as public hearings, referendum and plebiscite, among other forms that allow the participation of all. Participatory democracy is a possibility to be considered in the current social context where environmental problems are getting worse.

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