

**SOCIAL MANAGEMENT BEYOND PROCRUSTES' BED<sup>i</sup>:  
Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Considerations**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This article aims to contribute for the consolidation of Social Management as a field of scientific knowledge. We search in the paradigms proposed by Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Jones (1993) the references to understand Social Management from its own ontology, epistemology and methodology. Social management, a promising field for the development of organizational studies, has its starting point in the non-state public interest, whilst the starting point of business management is the private interest. Since social management is an antinomian concept that opposes to business perspectives, the negative dialectics helps us to understand social management as a process that (re)construct and is not limited to "Procrustes' Bed". Therefore, social management constitutes a field of scientific knowledge under construction.*

**Keywords:** *Paradigms, Conflict, Consensus, Administration, and Social Sciences.*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Social Management has been presenting itself as a promising and developing field of organisation studies. Several authors and research groups around the country, who form the Brazilian Researchers Network in Social Management - RGS<sup>ii</sup> have dedicated themselves to this theme. Six editions of the Researchers National Meeting in Social Management (ENAPEGS) have already been held (2007-2012), presenting a steady growth every year. In this regard, some journals in Brazil deal specifically with this type of management as, for example: *Cadernos de Gestão Social* – CGS and *Revista de Administração Pública e Gestão Social* – APGS.

Deal to the relevancy of this subject, the aim of this paper is to contribute to the consolidation of Social Management as a field of scientific knowledge. In this sense, we search in the paradigms proposed by Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Jones (1993) the references for understanding Social Management from its own

ontology, epistemology and methodology. Therefore, the discussion carried out in this paper has as a background the paradigms proposed by these authors.

The intention of this work is not to “restrict” or “classify” Social Management within a “generic paradigm”, let alone to avoid or limit its possibilities of development. In other words, the aim is not to lay Social Management into the “Procrustes’ Bed”. Obviously, the intention is neither to exhaust the subject, nor to address Social Management in a prescriptive perspective, which we understand to be strange for the construct of Social Management. The intention is to amplify ontological, epistemological and methodological discussion on Social Management, based on works that deal with these characteristics. The interpretative methodology was chosen to conduct the study, and it is essentially based on theoretical contributions about the subject.

In addition to the introduction, this article is divided into six parts. In the second part, we present the concept and the characteristics of Social Management. In the third part, Jones’ perspective (1993) and his three paradigms are discussed. Next, the field of Administration knowledge is addressed under Burrell and Morgan’s perspective (1979). In the following part, an effort to approach the works of Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Jones (1993) is made. In the following topic, the epistemological interpretations concerning the theoretical characteristics of Social Management are developed and, in the seventh part, we present the final considerations.

## 2. CONCEPT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MANAGEMENT

The field of Social Management has been outlined by different authors in recent years (França Filho, 2003; 2008; Oliveira; Cançado & Pereira, 2010; Cançado; Tenório & Pereira, 2011; Cançado, 2011). According to these authors’ perception, Social Management belongs to the society itself and it is opposed to business management, which is based on the market. In that sense, Social Management is a dialogic management process where all the social actors are involved in the decision-making process. Social Management has the non-state public interest as starting point, whilst the starting point of the strategic management is the private interest.

According to Cançado et al. (2011) and Cançado (2011), the main conceptual references on Social Management are the works by Tenório (1998; 2008a; 2008b; 2010; 2012), França Filho (2003; 2008), Fischer (2002), Fischer and Melo (2003; 2006), Carrion (2007), Boullosa (2009) and Boullosa and Schommer (2008; 2009). For Cançado (2011), the basic characteristics of Social Management are: collective decision-making without coercion, transparency, dialogicity and understanding. The practices of these characteristics may add to man’s emancipation.

The common characteristic to all texts that conceptually deal with Social Management is the **collective decision-making**, which may be described as one of its theoretical bases. Tenório (1998; 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2012) proposes the deliberative citizenship in the public sphere; França Filho (2003; 2008) addresses the subordination of instrumental logic (based on the hierarchized power) to other types of logic; Fischer (2002) and Fischer and Melo (2006) present the issue of the articulation of multiple power levels and the contradictions between individual and collective interests; and Carrion (2007) addresses “good local governance”, based on democratic and deliberative participation as contributions for better understanding Social Management. In addition to these studies, Pinho (2010) considers participation as a central characteristic of the concept of Social Management.

Cançado (2011) reinforces the idea that collective decision must be free of coercion. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought (Freire, 1987, 1996, 2001), otherwise the decision is not collective in its full sense, and becomes dependent on the pressure’s power of the groups or people involved in the deliberative process. Additionally, the decision-making process must be based on understanding through free argumentation and not on negotiation in the utilitarian sense of the term, thus it should be based on Habermas’s Theory of communicative action (Tenório, 1998; 2008a, 2008b). These conditions are necessarily interdependent, because coercion is a strange condition in the process if the decision is effectively collective. In the case of Social Management, understanding (not negotiation) should be its way. This characteristic of Social Management is called **dialogicity**.

**Transparency** is another Social Management characteristic, because, if the decision-making process passes by understanding, and by the use of language and communication among people, the information must be available to all. Therefore, the language must be intelligible to all participants (Cançado, 2011). In this sense, transparency does not refer only to the absence of secret, but also by the comprehension of information by the participants.

**Social emancipation** configures in the context of Social Management's characteristics as the ultimate goal of this process based on deliberative citizenship (Cançado, 2011). The effective participation in the decision-making process brings growth and maturity for the actors (Freire, 1987, 1996, 2001), whom amplify their own view of the world as rational human beings and citizens engaged in the public sphere. Therefore, one can conceptually delimitate Social Management as a collective decision-making process, motivated by non-state public interest, with no coercion, based on the intelligibility of the language, dialogicity and enlightened understanding as a process, transparency as an assumption and emancipation as an ultimate goal (Cançado et al., 2011; Cançado, 2011).

It is worthwhile to point out that the characteristics presented above may be considered as a Weberian ideal type<sup>iii</sup>, because social and cultural inequalities and power relationships may easily lead one to believe that it is impossible to fully assess these characteristics all together in practice. However, these characteristics may be observed in actions as the "communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), in public spaces like the Forums of Solidarity Economy, in agrarian reform initiatives and in the public security sector around the country.

Another concept that may be added to the characteristics presented above is legitimate peripheral participation, which may be defined as a process through which the apprentice (or newcomers, or yet those who do not know this specific process and its rules) become full members and get legitimation by participating in the socio-cultural practices of a community or public sphere. The beginner will build his legitimated participation getting help from the more experienced members, learning by observing the practices of more skilled participants, and knowing the process itself and the game's rules. However, it is important to observe that legitimate peripheral participation asks for more than just simple observation; it requires the participation practice as a form of cultural learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, even when there are asymmetric information and unequal power relations, the relationship and participative practice have potential to develop the dialogical management process.

A deeper analysis of the contributions to the field of Social Management may offer us other theoretical elements which constitute the bases of Social Management. Schommer and França Filho (2006) point out the concept of communities of practice<sup>iv</sup> (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as a possibility of educational development for social managers. The communities of practice may be understood as a space of Social Management par excellence, since its logic is linked to the respect and interaction among different knowledge (Schommer & França Filho, 2006; 2008; 2010), close to the dialogic education proposed by Freire (1987; 1996; 2001), which includes the legitimate peripheral participation. Therefore, the theoretical reflection about the communities of practice is an important route for delimitating the field of Social Management. Another important theoretical route is Tenório's perspective (1998; 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2012), based on Habermas' deliberative citizenship and Theory of Communicative Action, as well as in the dialogic communication postulated by Freire (1987). Keeping these considerations about the concept of and characteristics of Social Management in practice, in the next section we discuss the different paradigms of Social Sciences.

### 3. PARADIGMS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

In this section, we present an approach to interpret the paradigms of Social Sciences that reflect the development of the scientific knowledge, which support Applied Social Sciences, as Management and, specifically, Social Management.

According to Jones (1993), one can interpret reality from three social science paradigms, which are: The structural consensus paradigm, the structural conflict paradigm, and the interpretative paradigm. Supporting each one of the paradigms, we have three main sociologists: Durkheim, Marx and Weber, respectively. Each of these three paradigms has its ontology, epistemology, methodology and method.

**Ontology** refers to the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what can be known about it. **Epistemology** concerns the nature of the relation between the researcher and what can be studied. This relation is determined by the ontological conception of reality that the researcher adopts. **Methodology** is concerned with how the researcher acts to find out what he believes that can be known. It is the strategy devised by the scientist to obtain necessary evidences for his research. **Method** (technique) is a specific tool to collect these evidences (Alencar, 2007, p. 22).

There are three paradigms and one reality, each one with its own characteristics, representing or trying to represent the same reality. The researcher must be free to use the reference that he seems to be more adequate, and any attitude that moves apart from this path is anti-scientific (Alencar, 2007). At the same time, "[...] the

scientific community is rigorous and very careful for accepting innovations” (Alencar, 2007, p.14). The structural consensus paradigm was delineated by the positivist thinking of interpreting a reality.

[...] based on the concepts of social reality of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), sociologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, like Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), Émile Durkheim (1859-1917) and Robert Redfield (1897-1958) developed theories to explain the society starting from this pattern. Such theories make up what has been called ‘structural consensus’ approach (Alencar, 2007, p. 18).

Durkheim, like Comte before him, believed that the study of social sciences could be undertaken in the same way as the study of natural sciences (Alencar, 1999, 2007).

The structural consensus approach starts from the principle that culture exists before the individual and that socialization is the fundamental process of this approach. In other words, behaviour is a result of culture, “[...] human behaviour is a learned behaviour” (Jones, 1993, p. 6). The ideal method for this research approach is the hypothetical-deductive method, where the researcher starts from a theory, formulates the hypothesis, tests its validity and draw conclusions based on the results. Additionally, the researcher must try to be impartial, avoiding the influence of his beliefs when establishing research’s objects or even during the research process (Alencar, 1999, 2007; Jones, 1993).

On the other hand, several theories added to the structural conflict approach, among them the Marxism, dependency theory, feminism and *countervailing power* theory. The approach’s foundation is placed on the supposition that the origin and the persistence of structural inequality are built on the domination of the privileged ones over the non-privileged and that “[...] society determines our behaviour by means of structure and constraint” (Jones, 1993, p. 9). In this context, “[...] the conflict of interests is inherent to the unequal society [...]”, however, “[...] the manifestation of conflict may be inhibited either by coercion or by the socialization process” (Alencar, 2007, p. 25). The ideology behind legal-political institutions has the purpose of “[...] legitimating the institutional arrangements within society, mainly its property system or modes of distributing the rewards of the productive process” (Alencar, 2007, p. 26).

Structural approaches, both the structural consensus and the structural conflict paradigms see “[...] the origin of social life in the influence or determination of individual external factors [structure], but these approaches disagree on which those external factors are” (Alencar, 2007, p. 29). Whilst the Consensus paradigm believes that culture is the external cause, the Conflict paradigm believes that the relationships among unequally privileged groups in society are the cause. In addition to this, the proponents and followers of the conflict paradigm believe culture is a means of reinforcing and perpetuating these differences (Alencar, 1993).

On the other hand, the difference between “structural” and “interpretative” approaches is placed exactly into the importance given to the factors of external influence. The Interpretative paradigm believes that the essence of social life “[...] is the ability that human beings have to examine what happens around them and, then, choose how to act in the light of this interpretation” (Alencar, 2007, p. 30). In other words, one must concentrate himself at the micro-level of social life analysis: on the ways in which the individuals interact, and not at the macro-level: how social structure influences the individuals. Society cannot be thought as existing before the subjects, because society is the result of men’s interaction and not its cause; interactions create society and not the opposite way around. Even if there are impulsive actions, most of human actions are intentional; they have sense and meaning (Alencar, 1999, 2007).

For the interpretative paradigm, the individuals are different and have different perceptions of the reality, because they have different life stories and qualifications that make them part of certain groups, but at the same time deviate them from other groups. They are allocated in a social structure, they are integrated parts of a specific culture, with interests that may or may not be conflicting with the other interests (Alencar, 1999, 2007; Jones, 1993). Within this context, “[...] the most important influence on the behaviour of an individual is the behaviour of other individuals in relation to him or her” (Jones, 1993, p. 15). The researcher, aligned with this paradigm, attempts to understand the orientation process of social actors and he can only achieve this objective by adopting the same perspective of the social actors. The hypothetical-deductive method gives way to the interpretative or comprehensive method, tending more to the inductive method where the style comes from explanations and actions provided by the actor himself.

[...] Inductive method [...] in which the categories and models are originated from the explanations and action the actors give to the researcher who, in his turn, will try to

‘reconstruct’ the social reality. The identification of relevant factors for explaining and interpreting the actions (possible ‘variables’), which allow the development of models and theories is a product of the research process, instead of being its means and tools (Alencar, 2007, p. 39).

Table 1 shows the synthesis of the three paradigms previously presented. According to Alencar (2007), nowadays we live a moment of reflection about the three paradigms. Several authors, from different theoretical background, have been working towards joining micro and macro perspectives (action and structure or individual and society). Among them, we highlight on Table 1: Alain Tourraine (political action system), Anthony Giddens (theory of structuration), Brandura (social cognitive theory), Georg Lukács (history and class consciousness), Jürgen Habermas (communicative action), Michel Foucault (power and knowledge) and Pierre Bourdieu (social practice).

Insert Table 1 here

None of the three paradigms is enough to completely explain the complexity of social life. However, they are important approaches to understand the theoretical delimitation of the field of Social Management. The conflict and interpretative paradigms have shown the dynamicity and complexity of life in society, and the consensus paradigm has shown the strength and the coercion that society exerts upon the individuals. Another important step was to understand that each approach addresses specific dimensions of social life, reflecting ontological conceptions of reality. Thus, any work carried out according to one of the conceptions cannot be judged as being right or wrong by the other approach, because it is limited by its own way of seeing the reality (Alencar, 1999, 2007). In addition to the Social Science paradigms, the paradigms of Administration may add to the understanding in the field of Social Management.

#### 4. PARADIGMS OF ADMINISTRATION

Since the studies of Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henry Fayol, Administration seeks to establish itself as a field of scientific knowledge, an applied social science, as medicine is an applied biological science or engineering is an applied exact science.

If Administration is a science, what is its object of study? According to França Filho (2004, p. 121), there is an “ancient quarrelling” about this subject. What would be this object “[...] the management, as a practice, or the organisations, as a social phenomenon?”

On the other hand, when addressing business administration (for profit) Moreira (2000) argues that Administration is “better seen” as a practice (and not as a science), since its intention is to reach a diagnosis. The author argues that empirical knowledge (the one learned in practice) is essential in Administration; thus, the work of the researcher in Administration would be similar to that of the anthropologist and the ethnographer. Another consideration of this author is that this knowledge could not be judged, as it is the case with the scientific research, because the inferences are fragile from the methodological point of view. Moreira’s point view of science (2000), as one can see, is clearly inductive. In other words, he does not classify Administration as a science. Another important finding is that this author “artificially” separates theory from practice, as if such thing was possible.

In a more comprehensive perspective, França Filho (2004) presents three major “bodies of ideas” in Administration: techniques or methodologies of management, functional areas and organisational theory (organisational studies).

Techniques or methodologies of management go together in Moreira’s proposal of interpretation (2000). According to França Filho (2004), these two aspects are conceived within the companies aiming a general validation, and they were transferred to Public Administration (managerialism) or to social organisations in general (professional management). The techniques are based on Guereiro Ramos’ utilitarian rationality (Guereiro Ramos, 1981) and they ignore “[...] all kinds of reasoning about action’s ethical validity, or, the very sense of the proposed objectives, occupying only about its consecution” (França Filho, 2004, p. 122). The techniques and methodologies of management are carried out as prescriptive models, incorporating knowledge essentially technical. Some examples are the Rational Work Organisation (Taylor) and the Management by Objectives (Drucker). They are also targeted by fads like *downsizing*, *benchmarking* and *re-engineering*. Such perspective approximates itself to structural consensus paradigm, because they are prescriptive models based on the direct relationship between cause and effect.

The functional areas are the legacy of Fayol's work in the early twentieth century, and they are so rooted in Administration that, nowadays, on a large scale, shape the Administration courses like marketing, finances, human resources (or more recently, people management) and production. The techniques and methodologies of management perceive the same prescriptive character of knowledge. In this case, the professional usually sees himself forced to specialize in one of those areas due to companies' demands (França Filho, 2004).

In organisational theory, the object is no longer the management but the organisation itself. Prescription gives way to explanation, and the studies are extended to other organisations, a part of business companies. The organisational theory is divided into two major strands: the behavioural approach, based on North American psychology, which privileges themes like motivation, leadership and decision-making; and the sociology of organisations, influenced by North American sociologists of functionalist inspiration. In the latter, the studies on bureaucracy and social systems are highlighted like "[...] in the chain of interpretation carried out by Talcott Parsons of the works left by Max Weber" (França Filho, 2004, p. 127). Even having a functionalist origin, there is a strand intitled critical studies "[...] whose main concern is to reveal some of important dimensions of organisational analysis not considered by the functionalist perspective" (França Filho, 2004, p. 130). This perspective is closer to interpretative and structural conflict paradigms.

By presenting this plurality of ideas in Administration, França Filho (2004) presents three possibilities of answers for the questions: What is Administration? Would Administration be an art, an ideology or a science?

Administration as art is based on the belief that there would be inborn characteristics that would make some people to have ability for being good managers. This belief is usually based on stories of successful people considered as "great managers" who, without practically any study, could create great empires. Such ideas laid entrepreneurship's foundations and are well seemed nowadays (França Filho, 2004). On the other hand, Administration as ideology means assuming that management is not a neutral knowledge, but it would be always at the service of capital. Administration, under these terms, would be a domination system (Aktouf, 2004; França Filho, 2004; Gurgel, 2003).

Considering Administration as a science leads us to "[...] recognize it as an area of scientific knowledge" (França Filho, 2004, p. 137). According to this author, it does not mean to recover the works of Taylor, Fayol, Gant and Gilbreth, engineers that have undertaken themselves to create a field of scientific knowledge with its own laws, following the example of engineering, in a positivist orientation. This perspective means, for that author, the recognition of Administration as a field of scientific knowledge, with a research object, which, according to his own point of view, is the organisation as a phenomenon, because "[...] management is an essential dimension of the organisational universe" (França Filho, 2004, p. 139). Considering these diverse possibilities of interpretation Administration, França Filho (2004, p. 131) suggests: "if administration appears as a plural field of knowledge, why do not understand it also in a plural sense?"

A very discussed and useful proposal is the work by Burrell and Morgan (1979) that proposes to chart sociological perspectives, including those of Administration, by means of four paradigms, based on meta-theoretical assumptions, creating a correlated matrix. The four paradigms would be, according to the authors, mutually exclusives (paradigmatic incommensurability). The central idea of this proposal is that all organisational theories are based on a philosophic science and a theory of society (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

According to Burrell (2007, p. 448), the book was written in a time when "[...] functionalism was declining, but the legitimacy of alternative perspectives was still uncertain". Burrell (2007) declares the paradigms by Burrell and Morgan (1979) are like "Procrustes' Bed". The main criticism is regarding the extreme simplification of social sciences into four static categories. By proposing a matrix of correlated analysis, the book that proposed an alternative to functionalism, fell itself into the trap of conservatism. However, the main criticism was concerning the paradigmatic incommensurability, tenaciously sustained by the authors (Burrell, 2007). On the other hand, Burrell and Morgan's work (1979) revealed a protected niche for alternative researchers to work away from the criticisms of the functionalists; protected by the incommensurability of the paradigms (Clegg & Hardy, 2007).

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), social scientists address their subjects based on ontology, epistemology, human nature, and methodology. Ontology refers to assumptions regarding the real essence of the phenomenon under investigation. Epistemology is linked with ontology and it refers to assumptions on the bases of knowledge, in other words, how a person could understand the world and explain his understanding to his fellows. Human nature, in turn, refers itself to the relationship among human beings and their environment. Social science must consider this dimension, because human being is, at the same time, subject and object of

social investigation. Finally, methodology is related to the way one attempts to investigate and acquire knowledge of the social world.

These dimensions of analysis are close to those of Jones (1993). The difference is that in Burrell and Morgan's approach (1979) the dimension method is absorbed by the methodology, and they added the human nature as a dimension. The description of the four paradigms of Burrell and Morgan (1979) are presented on Figure 1 and, afterwards, they are compared with the paradigms proposed by Jones (1993) (Figure 2). However, initially, Burrell and Morgan (1979) propose a scheme for analysing the assumptions about the nature of social sciences (Table 2), and then the assumptions about the nature of society (Table 3) in order to structure the four paradigms (Figure 1).

Concerning the ontological debate, shown on Table 2, the nominalist approach believes that individual external world is built by himself and from himself. The realist approach claims that the external world exists independently of the individual, that is, it exists *a priori*. Epistemology, on its turn, opposes positivism and anti-positivism. Positivism is based on the search of regularities and causal relations between the constituent elements, with a cumulative perspective of knowledge development. This conception is still dominant in social sciences. On the other hand, anti-positivism would be the opposite conception, which postulates that the search for general laws and subjacent regularities is useless and world can only be understood from the individual point of view that are directly involved in the studied reality.

Insert Table 2 here

A part from that, human nature addresses the model of man in social theory. The determinist point of view sees men and his activities completely determined by their environment and by the situation in which they find themselves. On the other hand, the voluntarist point of view believes that man has free will. Additionally, the methodology is between the ideographic and nomothetic approaches. The ideographic approach is based on the standpoint that social world can only be understood by the acquisition of knowledge from investigation. However, the nomothetic approach emphasizes the importance of basing the research on the systematic and technical protocol, and on hypothesis testing within the canons of scientific rigor. The nomothetic approach is used in natural sciences (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

According to these authors, the objective point of view is related to the sociological positivism, while the subjective one is linked to the Germanic idealism. During the past seventy years (1920-1980), several attempts of approximation between the perspectives have done, establishing intermediate positions (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

On the other side of Burrell and Morgan's model (1979) is the nature of society, linked to the dichotomy between the sociology of regulation and the sociology of radical change. The sociology of regulation refers to the theoretical studies that emphasize unit and cohesion, and it is essentially concentrated in the necessity of regulating human tasks, giving priority in understanding how society is kept as an institution. The sociology of radical change stands in opposition to the sociology of regulation, since it concentrates on finding explanations for radical changes, structural conflicts, modes of domination and structural contradictions of society. This perspective is interested on man's emancipation in relation to the structures that limit and prevent his potential of development (Table 3).

Insert table 3 here

Keeping the considerations about the theories in mind, we can consider the four paradigms of social sciences structured by Burrell and Morgan (1979) to understand Social Sciences. These authors emphasize that the paradigms taken together, as on Table 4, offer a map to identify basic similarities and differences in theoretical studies. It shows also their reference frameworks. The model emphasises, in a rather assertive way, the paradigmatic incommensurability, because the paradigms do not communicate within each other and the theories constructed within one of the paradigms cannot be explained (and accepted) in other paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Insert Figure 1 here

The characteristics of the four paradigms are presented in the sequence and, then a proposal of rapprochement with the paradigms described by Jones (1993) is put forward. The first rapprochement concerns the paradigmatic incommensurability, supported by the two perspectives.

## 5. INTERFACE BETWEEN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ADMINISTRATION PARADIGMS

The functionalist paradigm is still the dominant paradigm in social sciences and in organisational studies. It has its bases on the sociology of regulation and perceives the main subject from an objective point of view. The most important characteristic is the interest in explaining: *status quo*, social order, social integration, solidarity and the necessity of satisfaction. Its point of view is clearly realist, positivist, determinist and nomothetic (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This paradigm approximates the Structural Consensus paradigm (Jones, 1993), because both have clearly a positivist bias with a pragmatic and invariable ontology of reality (objective), hypothetical-deductive epistemology, and methodology inspired by natural sciences. The human nature, proposed by Burrell and Morgan (1979), has a determinist character, which matches the perspective of reality composed by phenomena in invariable causal relationships, as proposed by Jones (1993) for the Structural Consensus paradigm.

Although the Interpretative paradigm identifies itself with the sociology of regulation, it is interested in understanding the world, the way it is, by means of its own inter-subjective nature, and by observer's consciousness and individual perception. The social world is perceived as created by individuals themselves. Social reality does not exist outside men's consciousness. This paradigm is nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Thereby, this paradigm approximates of the same denomination in the Jones's work (1993). In addition to the same nomenclature, they have common characteristics: ontologically, reality is constructed by subjects (subjective), epistemologically they are anti-positivists (knowledge is only possible in a context full of meanings that support the actions), and their methodology accept the actor's interpretation, linked to his own interaction within a specific social scenario.

The Radical Humanist paradigm intends to develop the sociology of radical change, apprehending the necessity of transcending the limitations of social arrangements in society. In this paradigm, man's consciousness is dominated by ideological superstructures that direct his knowledge. This paradigm, like the Interpretative paradigm, is nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The paradigm proposed by Jones (1993), that is closer to the radical humanism, is the Interpretative paradigm. However, the radical humanism carries the structural perspective (Sociology of Radical Change) that can also have an interface with the Structural Conflict paradigm, which has the purpose of promoting emancipation (from a dominant ideological structure); although, this concern is not central in the Interpretative paradigm.

On the other hand, the radical humanism has a voluntarist perspective of Human Nature, which moves it away from the Structural Conflict paradigm. The radical humanist paradigm differs from the structural conflict paradigm because of its subjective and voluntarist point of view. Thus, since there is no direct rapprochement, it can be considered as having characteristics from Structural Conflict and Interpretative paradigms.

The radical structuralism paradigm, on its turn, approximates the sociology of radical change from an objective perspective, with many similarities with the functionalist theory, although with different goals. It perceives the society as characterised by fundamental conflicts that cause radical changes by means of political and economical crises. The paradigm is compromised with radical change, emancipation and potentiality, with special attention to modes of domination. Its point of view is, like the functionalist paradigm, realist, positivist, determinist and nomothetic (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The radical structuralism paradigm approaches the Structural Conflict paradigm, proposed by Jones (1993). Its ontology is based on an economically dominated society (objectivist), whose operation does not depend on human consciousness. The epistemology is based on the analysis of the forces that underlie social life (conflict and change). The methodology takes into consideration the historical context and its relationship with those domination forces. The human nature proposed by the radical structuralism paradigm is determinist, which is in accordance with the domination and evolutionist perspectives engendered in the Structural Conflict paradigm.

Figure 2 illustrates Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms (1979): Radical Humanism, Radical Structuralism, Interpretative and Functionalist. They are related to the three paradigms of Jones (1993): Structural Consensus, Structural Conflict and Interpretative. The comparison is rather direct, given the characteristics of each of paradigms. Therefore, it can be seen that the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) is similar to Jones' work (1993), in order to address them as a whole. At first glance, one can have the feeling that the Radical Humanism would be evidence that paradigmatic incommensurability is unfounded, because the paradigm itself would be the "meeting" or "blend" of structural conflict and interpretative paradigms. A closer look demonstrates that radical humanism paradigm has characteristics from both paradigms, but it differs also from them, in order to configure a new paradigm.

Insert Figure 2 here.



Another inference from these paradigms leads to their approximation with the normal Kuhnian science (Kuhn, 1978). If the functionalist paradigm (or Structural Consensus paradigm) is the dominant paradigm, could the others be considered as contra-normal science or anomalies that would take to a scientific revolution? Yet, using Lakatos's perspective (1999), would this multiplicity of paradigms be the evidence that functionalist paradigm presents signals of degeneration and rival theories (other paradigms) would be fighting over the central role constituting themselves into a scientific investigation programme?

According to Reed (2007), in Kuhnian terms, we live in the time of scientific revolution in the organisational studies. However, "[...] neither the adherence to the relativist wave, nor the return to the dark cellars of orthodoxy seems to be an attractive future for the study of organisations" (Reed, 2007, p. 63). But, for Marsden and Townley (2001), the more visible struggle of legitimation in organisational studies happens between proponents and opponents of a positivist organisational theory, where it established itself as a Kuhnian normal science. However, the authors suggest "[...] instead of choosing between the normal and "contranormal" organisational science, it is more productive to investigate the nature of the object *about* which they disagree" (Marsden & Townley, 2001, p. 33).

On the other hand, França Filho (2004) proposes to understand Administration as a plural field and, therefore, multiparadigmatic. From these considerations, we search to understand how Social Management presents itself in the perspective of the discussed paradigms.

## 6. SOCIAL MANAGEMENT: ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND PARADIGMS

We believe that applying the concepts of ontology, epistemology and methodology, concerning the studies of Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Jones (1993), it is possible to delimitate the scientific field of Social Management. Wherefore, we compare the dimensions of Social Management with the assumptions of Burrell and Morgan (1979) about the nature of Social Sciences (Table 4).

Social Management has an **ontological nominalist** perspective, since the collective decision-making without coercion has as an assumption the issue of the intersubjectivity (transparency) and the construction of reality from understanding. In that sense, Social Management is not compatible with the realist point of view, where there is nothing that the individual may create. On the other hand, in order to achieve collective decision-making, the individual must believe that he may (re)construct his reality from his action upon the world.

**Antipositivism** characterizes Social Management in the same way as social reality may and must be (re)constructed in the interest of its member. The individual has to develop and use his perception. The individual is part of the reality and he acts upon his own reality. The researcher has to be considered also as subject of the research process. Under this perspective, the search for general laws of behaviour is not accomplished, because the world may be only understood from the standpoint of the subjects that participate in the collective decision-making without coercion.

Insert Table 4 here

The Human Nature of Social Management is the **voluntarism**. Free will is a condition for this process, if the perception is for (re)constructing reality from interaction among people and from their inter-subjectivity. Thus, a determinist position of human nature for Social Management would not be suitable.

Finally, the methodology for Social Management is the **ideographic one**. The ideographic method is based on the importance of allowing the subject to reveal his nature and his characteristics during the research. The methods used in the natural sciences (construction of hypothesis tests and quantitative data analysis) cannot perceive the nuances of Social Management.

Concerning the assumptions about the nature of society, Social Management approximates to the Sociology of Radical Change, since the ultimate goal is the emancipation of man. The structures of domination that limit and prevent the development are confronted in the perspective of constructing what is possible and not passively accepting the *status quo*. Therefore, under Burrell and Morgan's perspective (1979), Social Management would be registered within the Radical Humanist paradigm; and, under Jones' perspective (1993) it would present simultaneously characteristics of Structural Conflict and Interpretative paradigms.

Analysing Social Management approach according to Jones' paradigms (1993), we can see that reality is the result of subjects' meaningful action and their interactions, which is peculiar to the Interpretative paradigm. On

the other hand, emancipation is the goal pursued by Social Management, which encompasses a dialectic and historical perspective, approximating Social Management to the Structural Conflict paradigm.

This “classification” does not have the purpose of limiting the potential development of Social Management, fitting it to “Procrustes’ bed”. The intention is to make an effort in the sense of evidencing the ontology and the epistemology of Social Management from already built references. Therefore, in Social Management, ontological perspective enables the construction of society by its members and the reality is forged out by the interaction among the subjects, because they are able to interpret that reality and act upon it. Concerning its epistemology, it is important to point out that it is necessary to know the meanings of the actors’ actions to understand reality and, for this purpose, it is also necessary to understand these actors’ theories. This is only possible by qualitative methodologies, because there are no general laws to be uncovered.

In kuhnian terms (Kuhn, 1978), one may say that Social Management, in relation to Administration, may be understood as a “contra-normal” science, an anomaly in the sense of being an alternative theory to the hegemony of the so-called Traditional Administration (business management). Business Management would be the dominant paradigm, where the decision-making process is performed by the head of the organisation and the ultimate goal is profit maximization (Aktouf, 2004; Tenório, 1998; 2008a; 2008b). The freak condition of Social Management requires an advance in its theoretical and practical framing in order to strength its proposal so, it could confront the dominant paradigm. Accordingly, the discussion about its ontology and epistemology is not only necessary, but also fundamental to its survival and development.

According to Tenório (2012) and Caçado (2011), another important contribution to understand Social Management is Adorno’s negative dialectics (Adorno, 2009).

Negative dialectics is a permanent effort to avoid false syntheses. It puts under suspicion the definitive proposals for problem solutions, rejecting all systemic and totalising views of society. Thus, negative dialectics never conform to the *status quo*, representing a permanent effort to overcome the routinized daily reality. It is a permanent reasoning movement towards rescuing from the past the dimensions repressed and unaccomplished in the present, transferring them to a future where the limitations of the present do not exist anymore. Thus, in Adorno’s dialectics, the concept of theory is related to a better future, referring itself to the empirical dimension (Paes de Paula, 2008, p.7-8, author’s italics).

Since it is an antinomic concept to the business management perspective (private), the negative dialectics helps us to understand Social Management as a process that (re)constructs itself, and it does not fit in the “Procrustes’ Bed”.

## 7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The growing number and intensity of natural catastrophes, rubbish and hunger set by market, financial crises in increasingly shorter time spans, many people changing peripheral areas for large urban centres, among other facts, show that the development and administration models have not been shown to be sustainable in the broad sense of the term. The people undergoing the impact of certain decisions must have direct participation in the decision-making process, thus they also become responsible for the results of these decisions. Within this context, Social Management emerges as a specific possibility of rethinking the relationship among people and the decision-making model that has being traditionally adopted.

The development of Social Management’s practices, increasingly common in Brazil, helps in the consolidation of Social Management as a field of scientific knowledge. Therefore, it is relevant to analyse, discuss and construct its own ontology, epistemology and methodology. In this context, the content of this paper is expected to trigger theoretical reflections for the scientific understanding of Social Management. In this sense, Social Management is thought “beyond Procrustes’ Bed”.

The exercise of analysing Social Management within models such as those proposed by Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Jones (1993) is useful to understand the current limits of this new kind of management and the possibilities of its development to reach the common welfare. There are possibilities of aggregating new theoretical contributions that may deepen the discussion and add to the consolidation of Social Management as a field of scientific knowledge. Therefore, new theoretical studies should be produced to open more perspectives of analysis or contribute to strength the analysis performed in this article. Wherefore, we can see clearly that Social Management is a field of scientific knowledge under construction.

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<sup>i</sup> According to Bianchetti (1995, p. 7-8) "In Greek mythology, Procrustes had an iron bed at the entrance of the city on which he would lay all the travelers he could imprison. The bed was the measure. From that pre-established standard, people who did not fit the bed suffered an intervention, that is, the shortest ones were stretched, and the tallest ones, amputated. The main idea was to keep the previous measure, the standard". According to Burrell (2007), the Procrustean metaphor is relative to the theory that moans and writhes, that is forced to conform, because it does not fit the framework in which it is thought.

<sup>ii</sup> Further information available on the website: [www.rgs.wiki.br](http://www.rgs.wiki.br).

<sup>iii</sup> When considering these characteristics as a Weberian ideal type we are pointing out that these are characteristics to be sought, but they will hardly be fully reached as a whole at the same time, but, in any case, they serve as a "direction" for this search.

<sup>iv</sup> According to these authors, the concept of communities of practice refers to an interactional learning space where everyone teaches and learns at the same time.

Table 1: Synthesis of ontology, epistemology, and methodology of the structural consensus, structural conflict, and interpretative paradigms.

		<b>Paradigms</b>	
		<b>Structural Consensus</b>	<b>Structural Conflict</b>
		<b>Interpretative</b>	
<b>Ontology</b>	The nature of reality is objective, formed by phenomena in invariable causal relationships.	Society is a social system economically dominated (forces of production and relations of production) whose functioning is (a) independent from human consciousness or (b) independent from human consciousness, except when structural changes occur through political actions.  Forces of production and relations of production constitute the social framework. All the other relationships are based on the above-mentioned ones and form the superstructure (politics, law, religion, philosophy etc.).	Society is the construction of its members.  Social reality is formed by interaction occasions carried out by involved actors, since they are able to perform: a) Interpretation b) Meaningful actions.
<b>Epistemology</b>	Knowledge of the natural laws is only possible through demonstrable evidence collection of its existence (Quantification of causal relations).	Since all of the modes of production are forces that lay the foundations of social life, the search for knowledge adequate to this conception of reality is the comprehension of how social systems historically work.	a) The knowledge of the action interpretation and meaning is only possible when knowledge about the meanings that support its actions is acquired, understanding the theories of the actors via qualitative evidences. b) Do not search for “universal” laws (notion of social scenarios).
<b>Methodology</b>	Hypothesis deduction and its empirical verification: hypothetical deductive method.	Historical materialism: relationship between the modes of production and the forms of organisation of society either in a more comprehensive historical context or in societies and specific moments.	Use of interpretation: the researcher takes advantage of his condition of a creative social actor, or, he is able to interpret (like the actors that are the objects of analysis). A research is a conscious social interaction and occurs in specific social scenarios (cases). The analysis is conducted from the perspective of the actor.

Source: Adapted from Alencar (2007, p.25, 29 and 40) and Jones (1993, p.118 and 151).

Table 2 – A plan for analysing assumptions about the nature of social sciences in the perspective of the objective-subjective dimensions

<b>SUBJECTIVE-OBJECTIVE DIMENSIONS</b>		
<b>Subjective point of view of Social Science</b>	<b>Objective point of view of Social Science</b>	
Nominalism	<b>Ontology</b>	Realism
Anti-positivism	<b>Epistemology</b>	Positivism
Voluntarism	<b>Human nature</b>	Determinism
Ideographic	<b>Methodology</b>	Nomothetic

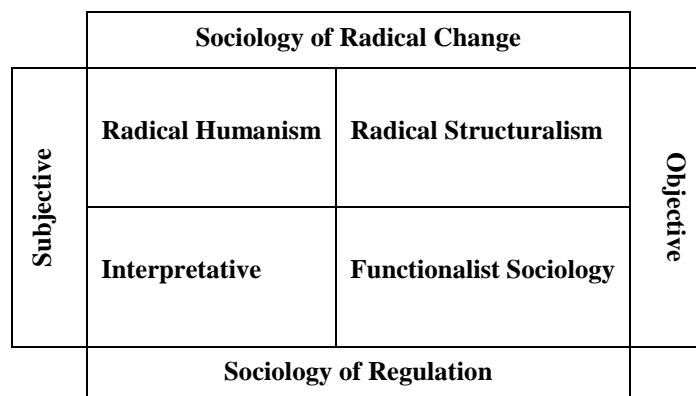
Source: Adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Burrell (2007)

Table 3 - Regulation and radical change dimensions in the Theory of Society

<b>REGULATION - RADICAL CHANGE DIMENSIONS</b>	
Regulation	Radical Change
Has to do with:	Has to do with:
<i>Status quo</i>	Radical Change
Social Order	Structural Conflict
Consensus	Modes of Domination
Integration and Social Cohesion	Contradiction
Solidarity	Emancipation
Need Satisfaction	Deprivation
Present Reality	Potentiality

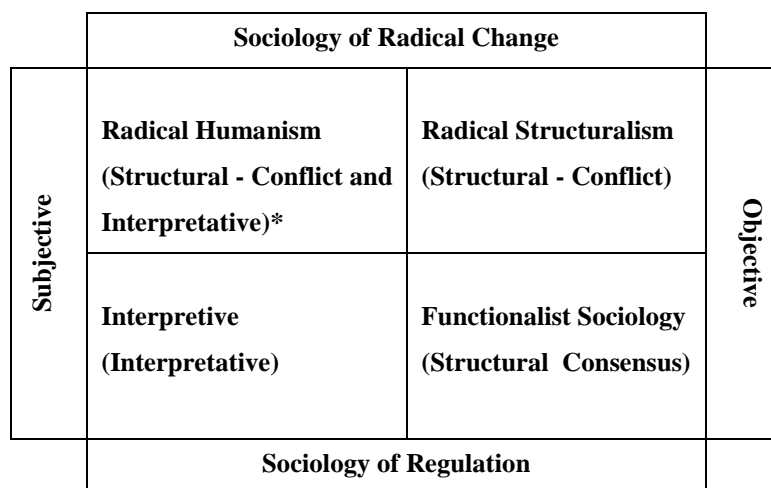
Source: Adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979)

Figure 1 – The four paradigms of social sciences



Source: Adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Burrell (2007).

Figure 2 - Comparison between Burrell and Morgan's paradigms (1979) and Jones' paradigms (1993)



Source: Elaborated by the author

\* The paradigm in the first line (inside each quadrant) refers to Burrell and Morgan's (1979) perspective and that in the second line, between brackets, refers to Jones's (1993) perspective.

\*\* A direct equivalent for the radical humanist paradigm has not been found. The radical humanist paradigm has characteristics peculiar to the structural conflict and interpretative paradigms, but it cannot be considered a fusion of the two paradigms.

Table 4 - Dimensions of Social Management related to the assumptions on Nature Sciences and Social Science according to Burrell and Morgan (1979).

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Characteristics of Social Management</b>
Ontology	Nominalism
Epistemology	Antipositivism
Human Nature	Voluntarism
Methodology	Ideographic

Source: Elaborated by the authors