DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN THE ADMINISTRATION FIELD: MAPPING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FIELD IN BRAZIL

DEMOCRACIA DIGITAL NA ÁREA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO: UM LEVANTAMENTO DA CONSTRUÇÃO DO CAMPO NO BRASIL

DEMOCRACIA DIGITAL EN EL ÁREA DE ADMINISTRACIÓN: UN LEVANTAMIENTO DE LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DEL CAMPO EN BRASIL

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to map the academic output in the field of Administration concerning Digital Democracy and e-Government. The corpus is formed by articles approaching management, public policies and information systems which were published in Brazilian high-impact journals from 2002 to 2016. The study analyzes the texts according to the variables year, journal, author and approach (managerial, political, hybrid) through content analysis. The study found 49 articles mostly concentrated in only seven journals and mostly produced by researchers at only six Brazilian institutions. In addition, we found that the term "digital democracy" was practically non-existent until 2011. Finally, the managerial approach was predominant in early stages, but was outnumbered by the political approach in recent years. We conclude that the area of Administration has been able to overcome an overly managerial view, but the subject still needs more academic attention.

KEY-WORDS: E-democracy, e-government, Administration, managerial approach, political approach.

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RESUMO

Esta pesquisa realiza um levantamento da produção acadêmica no campo da Administração sobre democracia digital, governo eletrônico e termos afins. A prospecção envolve artigos que abordam gestão, políticas públicas e sistemas de informação, publicados em periódicos qualificados na área de Administração, entre 2002 e 2016. O estudo lança mão de uma análise de conteúdo, classificando as publicações de acordo com as seguintes variáveis: ano, periódico, autor, abordagem (gerencial, política, híbrida). Foram encontrados 49 artigos, distribuídos em apenas sete periódicos e majoritariamente produzidos por pesquisadores provenientes de apenas seis instituições brasileiras. Ademais, evidenciamos que o termo "democracia digital" era praticamente inexistente até 2011. Por fim, a abordagem gerencialista era predominante inicialmente, mas foi superada pela abordagem política nos últimos anos. Conclui-se que a área de Administração já foi capaz de superar uma visão excessivamente gerencial, mas que o tema ainda carece de maior atenção acadêmica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Democracia digital, governo eletrônico, Administração, abordagem gerencialista, abordagem política.*

RESUMEN

En este artículo se hace un levantamiento de la producción de artículos en el campo de la Administración sobre democracia digital y gobierno electrónico. La encuesta cubre el período de 2002 a 2016 en artículos publicados en periódicos calificados, en el área de Administración, relacionados a la gestión, políticas públicas y sistemas de información. El estudio expone la publicación por año, por periódico y por autor, clasificándolos según tres enfoques: gerencial, política e híbrida usando el análisis de contenido. Los resultados indican una producción bastante concentrada. Se han encontrado 49 artículos, pero que se distribuyen en solo siete periódicos y la mayoría de las encuestas se centran en solo seis instituciones brasileñas. Además, evidenciamos que el término "democracia digital" era prácticamente inexistente hasta 2011. Por último, el enfoque gerencialista era predominante inicialmente, pero fue superado por el enfoque político en los últimos años. Concluimos que el área de Administración ya fue capaz de superar una visión excesivamente gerencialista, pero que el tema aún carece de una mayor atención académica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Democracia digital, gobierno electrónico, Administración, enfoque gerencialista, enfoque político.*

INTRODUCTION

The last three decades have been marked by state reform according to neoliberal ideas, a process that has affected Western countries in general, including Brazil. In general terms, this reform is based on theoretical assumptions that emphasize efficiency, mirroring private-sector management techniques to the detriment of democratic values such as equality, participation and social justice (Bresser-Pereira, 1998; Denhardt, 2011).

The range of possibilities for using the Internet is part of this discussion about the state's administrative modernization as this platform has been a mechanism to be appropriated by government for democratic purposes, such as interaction with citizens.

In the case of Brazil, e-government (e-gov) has been the main feature of this experience, though essentially through public services provided online, rather than the strengthening of a digital democracy (Abrucio, 2007; Pinho , 2008).

Thus, although some initiatives emphasizing the transparency of public agents' actions or online participation have been developed and improved, the experiences reveal that internet's democratic potential is still scarcely explored by the Brazilian public administration. In turn, Management research in Brazil indicates that the subject of digital democracy has been marginally covered by scholarly output in the area, at least compared to other views on the applications of digital technologies in public management, such as e-Admin-

istration and e-gov (Przeybilovicz, Cunha, & Coelho, 2015), and especially compared to other areas such as Communication and Social Sciences (cf. Sampaio, Bragatto, & Nicolás, 2016). This article aims to present reflections on how digital democracy has become a research theme in the field of Administration in the country based on the results of our survey on the state of the art in the literature of this area. Since this is an emerging subject, a conceptual discussion is undoubtedly appropriate.

Digital Democracy: In Search of a Definition

A definition of digital democracy (DD) demands reflection on its conceptual dimension. As a source of inspiration we will turn to analogous situations of emerging phenomena that are not yet mature enough, like digital democracy, in order to arrive at a conceptual definition of this type of democracy.

In the case of social management (SM), the search is pertinent to the extent that the phenomenon also includes the emergent aspect. "Like any concept in the process of being constituted, SM can become a structuring element of a new field of knowledge and practice or it can have an ephemeral life – just another fad" (Pinho & Santos, 2015, p. 158). The attempt to define an SM concept "denotes the incipience of its theoretical character and suggests that it is more prudent to refer to it as a notion and not precisely as a concept." (Pinho & Santos, 2015, p. 158).

In the case of DD, even though there is a novelty expressed in the qualification of democracy, a millennial process, it does not seem to be a fad because of the imperative nature of technology, which can have the weight to

shape a new way of defining and doing democracy. If in the case of SM a new form of management is qualified, in the case of DD, technology resources are essentially sought in order to make a new form of democracy. However, like SM, DD also aspires to higher levels of democracy.

Without going further into SM, the difficulty of defining the concept results from "a particular way of producing and appropriating concepts, which is mainly characterized by the dissociation between theory and social, economic and political contexts and, consequently, political projects" (Pinho & Santos, 2015, p. 159) thus leading to "a groundless appropriation of terms, which end up meaning anything – according to the speaker's preferences" (Pinho & Santos, 2015, p. 159). Concepts are thus transferred without "a consistent theoretical debate" (Pinho & Santos, 2015, p. 159) between the social assumptions from the concept's original environment and the assumptions from where it is applied, thus leading to a probable rejection.

We can also use a classic example of what a Brazilian researcher experienced when she was faced, in the United States, with the concept of accountability. When she tried to bring it to the Brazilian context, she realized that we simply lacked the concept (Campos, 1990). We lacked it because there were no structural conditions for its emergence in Brazilian reality.

Almost 20 years later, other researchers resumed the subject and found that, in spite of advances in the Brazilian institutional framework, we still lacked objective conditions to affirm what accountability is (Pinho & Sacramento, 2009). In other words, the

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concept exists when structural conditions are all present in the context under consideration for its emergence and consolidation. This picture can get even more complex and frightening. We can cite the situation examined by Hegel, who analyzed the Germany of his time to conclude that "[Germany] is no longer a state" (Hegel, 1969, p. 68). Thus, in dealing with the concept of the German Constitution, it only exists empirically and no longer founded on science. Therefore, he asserts that "[that] which cannot be conceptualized no longer exists" (Hegel, 1969, p. 68).

Our endeavor here is not to define DD in the face of such a situation, but rather define a concept that is emerging in contemporary times. In this case, it seems pertinent to resort to references defined in more advanced contexts, both from the viewpoint of social assumptions on which they are based and from technological bases. Dahlberg seems to come to our aid as he maps and proposes what DD could be at two different times – in 2001, when it was just a promise, waving to us, and in 2011, much closer to our time, when the author reevaluates what happened over a decade. It is interesting to look at the title of his 2001 article, "Democracy via cyberspace", a terminology that did not "catch on". The author begins by saying that whenever a new technology emerges, there is euphoria, enthusiasm and expectations for the advancement of democracy, and now the internet fulfills this role.

In order to understand the theoretical views on this emerging phenomenon, three major fields are identified: "liberal-individualist, communitarian and deliberative" (Dahlberg, 2001, p. 158). Let us briefly examine each of them. In the first case, strongly based on the

United States, there is the promise of "teledemocracy", with individuals ruling straight from their chairs. Interestingly, like the title, this epithet did not succeed either, being typical of an area that was just taking its first steps. In other words, difficulties were not just in in defining concepts, but in defining the names themselves. In assessing existing experiences, the author does not hesitate to say that computer networks had been used to a very limited extent in teledemocracy projects.

On the other hand, he does not deny the potential of using internet technology to increment decision-making mainly by creating an exchange of ideas between participants. As its name implies, the emphasis is on individuals, and it aims to enhance the existing liberal system. The gain, Dalhberg points out, would be that consumers would be free to move around the cyberspace without the constraints found in "real" space. In the communitarian field, technologies are used to strengthen local communities in the face of dominant individualism, as well as to bring geographically distant communities closer together, thus producing a sense of collectivity and a different way of viewing public space. Dalhberg does not give concrete examples of application of these ideas, which end up seeming more like promises or future possibilities.

The third field the author describes already bears the label of electronic democracy, based on a model of deliberative democracy. The main purpose here is to turn private individuals into active citizens, starting from institutions created to enable this change, which is to be constructed through rational dialogue. Deliberative democracy demands a democratic interaction where differences

should be overcome by building an argument of consensus. Heavily founded on Habermas, this view demands the intervention of media vehicles, which is where the internet can play a decisive role. The author presents some experiences at that embryonic point. The stakes of democracy development were heavily concentrated in these last two fields. Anyhow, they still have an embryonic character, being more like promises than actual achievements.

Pinho (2011) presented a synthesis of the views of these early years of internet technology by dividing them into optimistic and pessimist. However, it is interesting to see how Dalhberg views the same issue from a theoretical viewpoint nearly a decade later. It is worth noting, as before, the title of the article: "Re-constructing Digital Democracy: An Outline of Four 'Positions'" (Dalhberg, 2011), where democracy already appears written as digital democracy and also containing an idea of reconstruction. Though it had been a relatively short period, the speed of dissemination and development of technological innovation drove a need for reconstruction. Again, the author starts from widespread enthusiasm about how digital technology (i.e., beyond the internet) can lead to democratic communication, and he considers the construction of four positions, understood here as positions in the sense of Weber's ideal types, i.e., grouping into a general category a set of phenomena with similar characteristics comprising rhetoric, practices, identities and institutions. In addition to adopting the DD label, the author also uses the term e-democracy, i.e., electronic democracy. The four positions considered are: "liberal-individualist, deliberative, counter-publics, and autonomist Marxist" (Dalhberg, 2011, p. 857).

Again, briefly speaking about each of them, the "Liberal-individualist digital democracy" rests on the initiatives and prominence of individuals who search for information on the web to achieve their interests.

The author mentions several such experiences; some have collective goals, but the type of DD here starts from particular initiatives, such as list signing, for example. In this type, democracy is made up from the aggregation of individuals' interests. In the case of Habermas-based "Deliberative Digital Democracy", the author's examples, which are found in various parts of the developed world, occur through online consultations, democratic debate forums, and participation in the websites of newspapers considered serious. Deliberation is brought about by consensus-building and it aims at the common good. It is heavily based on the idea that the internet can leverage this view of DD by creating interactive online spaces. However, not everything is positive, since the author warns about the risk of colonization of these spaces by the State and corporate interests. Counter-publics digital democracy, on the other hand, rests on the formation of activism and protesting groups.

There is also a belief that digital media are conducive to this type of arrangement, especially by giving voice to those excluded from dominant discourses. The examples given by the author are found in alternative digital social movements, including lists of emails, websites, digital audios and videos. They are embodied in anti-globalization movements, protests against the invasion of Iraq by the United States, women's associations in countries where women's rights are not guaranteed, refugee groups, separatist

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movements. They also aim to give a voice to groups excluded from traditional arrangements in politics. The fourth position, "Autonomist Marxist digital democracy", as its name implies, is founded on Marx's postulations of criticism of capitalism and the order that constitutes it. The idea is to use digital communication to create a democratic community independent of centralized powers, thus producing a network of anti-capitalist protest movements. Digital media, like mobile phones, are key to creating connections and protest mobilizations. However, a critical view sees these developments as precarious and subject to capture by the state and global capitalism. Dalhberg makes an evaluates these positions to point out that the last three positions are strongly rooted in academia and in activists developing experiments and projects in more developed countries. The author also criticizes what he views as overly high expectations for digital participation.

In our view, the reflections and categorizations presented by Dalhberg seem too macrostructural and far from a practice closer to reality, at least concerning the expectations generated in Brazil. In this regard, it is worth citing Gomes' arguments, which reflect the Brazilian context. As early as 2005, Gomes was drawing attention to the fact that the most enthusiastic phase with optimistic expectations about the internet had passed, as had the subsequent anti-utopic arguments. He therefore calls for "a more balanced assessment of the internet's promises and achievements for democracy" (Gomes, 2005, p. 63). For him, the problem is called political participation in the context of representative democracy in crisis, which could have a breath of enthusiasm with

internet resources. However, he notes the absence of "a qualified amount of authentic public arenas [..]" (Gomes, 2005, p. 61) and that "civil opportunities are rare and ineffective through the public discussion of public affairs". (Gomes, 2005, p. 61). He then asserts that the greatest opponent turns out to be "the rhetoric about the internet and the cyber-enthusiastic imaginary thriving in academia and journalism" (Gomes, 2005, p. 70).

The author focuses on elements that limit the construction of a DD, as already pointed out, and stresses that the State ends up playing a role of "providing basic information" (Gomes, 2005, p. 71) of its operation. He concludes by touching the central question: "Technological resources cannot frustrate or make promises of social effects. Technological resources are tools available to social agents, who can actually promise or frustrate hopes". (Gomes, 2005, p. 75). In other words, there is a rapid advance in technology, while the advance of a so-called digital democracy is still crawling, despite all advances and experiences developed in recent years. It is also pertinent to note that the theoretical treatment given to this issue does not include as detailed a theoretical specification as shown above – one speaks, or begins to speak, of DD without being tied to any theoretical view.

In short, it seems clear that the concept of DD is still under construction, bearing different perspectives as well as expectations, and this will reflect on the academic output examined in this article. These findings are hardly surprising, since all these developments are still very recent and there is a constant redefinition as technology advances, and it is appropriate to keep in mind Pinho's (2008) warning that there is much technol-

ogy and little democracy. Updating it to the present, one could say we have even more technology and less (compared to technology) democracy. In other words, the time of democracy is slower than that of technology development, which also explains and justifies the results of the empirical survey presented below.

DD emerges, as stressed above, in a context of crisis of representative democracy, a phenomenon occurring in democratic countries in general, and it sounds as a path to affirming a substantial innovation for popular participation in governments, or, in a broader sense, in the State (Coleman & Blumler, 2009). At the same time, DD arises from advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and their naturalization in citizens' daily lives, both of which result in increasing pressure on governments for transparency and accountability (Gomes, 2016).

If citizens do not feel mobilized or do not trust the institutions of representative democracy, then DD initiatives' construction and offers emerge as a route "to supplement, reinforce or correct aspects of the political and social practices of both the State and citizens for the benefit of the political community's democratic content" (Gomes, 2011, pp. 27-28). It therefore emerges as a new way of mobilizing citizens for political life.

Although technologies have an impact on lowering the cost of political participation, that does not mean a direct effect in terms of more active and participatory citizens, something that depends on more complex, deep and structural issues such as political culture (Gomes, 2011). In other words, questions

arise on whether digital technologies will suffice to produce a more active citizen in political life (Pinho, 2008). All these reflections move towards understanding DD, as said earlier, as a concept still under construction with high aspirations for the improvement of democracy, a path still in progress.

The aim of this study is to examine the stage in which management research in Brazil is with regard to these reflections, more specifically with regard to the comparison between technology development and its political application by citizens. Therefore, articles dealing with DD and/or electronic government were collected from all journals ranked B1 or higher in the area, i.e., journals of excellence. As said earlier, in Brazil, the emphasis on e-government has prevailed in academic research and in general practice. We found 49 articles classified through content analysis by year, journal, author and approach (managerial, policy, hybrid), as presented below.

THE PROCESS OF BUILDING e-DEMOCRACY FROM e-GOVERNMENT

Considering the application of the internet to public administration as a mechanism that can help promote greater dynamism in public services and bring State and society closer together, it was during ex-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso's administration that a set of actions was developed for increasing state efficiency. Thus emerged the so-called electronic government (e-gov). The first results of that work culminated in the creation of an unprecedented "Information Society Program in Brazil" (SocInfo), linked to the Ministry of Science and Technology (2000) and whose goals were summarized in the

famous Green Book, issued in 2000.

Though it included seven lines of action directed to the relationship between State, market and society, the SocInfo Program's actions were designed to prioritize e-commerce, with no interest in encouraging popular participation or promoting government transparency (Prado, 2009). In fact, the difficulty to absorb the program's ideas started within the government itself, given the complexity of its structure and the public sector's organizational culture of resistance to ICTs (Ministério da Ciência e Tecnologia, 2000).

With this experience in Cardoso's administration, in 2000 the Federal Government launched an Electronic Government Program which focused on creating a policy for improving the internal use of ICTs by the public administration in order to facilitate digital communication among its agencies, as well as reduce costs and improve government efficiency, including services provided for suppliers and citizens (Prado, 2009).

Initially, the electronic government proposed emphasized the construction of government websites, though it still did not point to actions that might expand the dialogue with society through the improvement of digital channels. Nor were investments made to encourage citizens to use them for democratic purposes. As a policy, however, it created the foundations for expanding the Federal Government's digital mechanisms, which would later be done by the Lula da Silva administration (Medeiros & Guimarães, 2006).

The first actions dedicated to the electronic government program in Lula's administration started in 2004. One of them was changing

the term "citizen-client", inherited from the SocInfo Program's initial phase, for just "citizen". This new terminology represented significant changes in how the program was conducted and, consequently, the contents of government websites were restructured. Government programs began to use simpler language, as well as an interface that facilitates browsing and expands the possibilities for interactivity and citizen participation, which was in line with the digital inclusion goals of the analyzed administration.

Conceptually, the notion of DD (also called electronic democracy or e-democracy) is initially thought of as synonymous with electronic government, which means a limited and erroneous understanding of the former. Thus, Cunha and Santos (2005) say that

> [...] The concepts of e-government, e-democracy, and e-governance seem to blur. They are sometimes used as synonyms, sometimes as subsets, and the boundaries of the fields that separate them are not always clear (p. 5).

Although the number of increasingly sophisticated digital initiatives for divulging public actions and facilitating contact with citizens has been growing, usually through government portals, their uses have poorly expanded, especially with regard to municipal governments. Without going further into whether the State is really interested in promoting real advances in this field, the gap can be partially attributed to the very pace of public management. This means that for all the modernization strategies developed – including ICTs – bureaucratic rites remain slow, not keeping up with or benefiting from the speed provided by digital media. This factor represents, from

the outset, a barrier to the idea of online participation as a way to face the problems posed in the offline environment (Nogueira, 2004), a barrier that has remained for a long time. Governmental portals in some studies showed limitations to, or even no channels for, participation (Pinho, 2008).

Therefore, public managers, whether technical experts or politicians, face a number of new challenges. First, as already mentioned, the demand for such technologies is increasing due to three factors: 1) the need for strengthening democratic ideas (e.g., participation and transparency as values to be pursued); 2) naturalization of everyday interactions with other citizens, agencies and organizations (it has become normal to interact with companies, banks, travel agents and even brands in the online environment); and 3) technological development, concerning the risk for an administration to seem "old", "outdated" (Coleman & Blumler, 2009; Gomes, 2016).

Secondly, participation costs may be low for citizens, but they tend to increase for public managers offering such technologies, which start to receive a myriad of new demands from society (Marques, 2010). In addition, state institutions need to deal with bureaucratic and institutional resistance to adapt to new technological standards. Here we refer both to a huge number of digital messages (e.g., emails or social media messages) that require specialized managers, and to the capacity or expertise the State must have in order to monitor, create and maintain such digital actions and programs.

Thirdly, as with any public policy, technical, managerial, and/or political issues emerge,

as well as conflicts of interest, which need to be considered in the creation, maintenance, and delivery of such initiatives. The digital divide is one of these factors and it contributes to keep certain parts of the population away from public policy discussions (Aggio & Sampaio, 2014).

In view of the demands and challenges above, the government is often faced with the choice of more managerial decisions, i.e., more connected to technical decisions generally focused on digitizing the State (e-gov), or more political decisions, i.e., more related to the normative values of DD (e-dem).

On the other hand, the increased demand for interaction by society as a whole, and the pressure from social groups who are active in related areas (e.g., hacktivism, free software, open data, open government, etc.) have not yet translated into online participation or even into some significantly greater interaction with the government tools already available. Research has repeatedly shown that searching for government portals and social media is still mainly motivated by instrumental issues of private interest, such as registration in civil service admission tests and other services such as taxpayer number search (Barbosa, 2016).

These data seem to reinforce that an attempt at DD is reduced to e-government actions, thus aborting the construction of an alternative, more robust path to democracy. That said, we have, on the one hand, administrations that perform an almost ritualistic implementation of electronic services (in view of a society that demands weakly and makes limited use of the interaction resources

sometimes available); on the other hand, the government may, when using digital technologies, hide behind them to provide information inaccurately or cause information overload, i.e., an information "intoxication" that confuses rather than clarifies or facilitates things for the digitally active citizen.

This complex scenario, as we can see, leads us to propose identifying three possible approaches for thinking about actions in the context of DD, considering the experiences implemented by presidential administrations in Brazil and analyzed by researchers in the area of Administration: managerial, political and hybrid.

From the first perspective, e-government would be seen as a possibility to provide and increase the efficiency of government services. In the second category, the development of electronic government would be addressed as something that goes beyond service delivery to encompass a potential for political change through the digital environment, which could lead to a broader reflection, to the notion of DD. In the first case, digital artifacts would be management mechanisms, while in the second case, they would be mechanisms through which civil society would act upon the state from a more political viewpoint, rather than a managerial or instrumental one.

The managerial approach views e-government as a technological modernization of public management, an effort to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government services provided through the use of ICTs. (Agune & Carlos, 2005; Diniz, Barbosa, Junqueira, & Prado, 2009; Medeiros & Guimarães, 2006). The definition adopted by

Joia and Cavalcante (2004) summarizes this view:

> It aims to electronically provide or make available information, services or products from or through public agencies at any time and place and for any citizen, in order to add value to all stakeholders involved with the public sphere (p. 2)

On the other hand, political-approach authors argue that e-government should provide a contribution beyond the features encompassed in the managerial approach. For them, what should be emphasized is that e-gov can be an important component in the process of democratizing government and reinforcing citizens' interest in public affairs. In other words, e-gov should be about "extending people's access to government beyond common services to reach another qualitative sphere in terms of republican interaction" (Ruediger, 2002), or furthering citizenship and democracy by increasing the accountability of institutions and the participation of civil society (Guimarães & Medeiros, 2005).

Thus, the political approach distinguishes different dimensions of electronic government and assigns them different names. While Guimarães and Medeiros (2005) distinguish "electronic government" from "electronic governance", for example, Pinho (2008) calls these classes "restricted electronic government" and "extended electronic government". The first type encompasses the advances provided by technologies, while the second aims to go beyond technology itself towards a broader democratization of society. Interestingly, Pinho keeps the term "e-government" in both situations, indicating the centrality of and reference to the concept of e-gov in the

area of Administration, i.e., advances do not escape this scope.

The authors who adopt the political approach generally tend to argue that the pursuit of service efficiency is an important dimension, but, on the other hand, they adopt terms that, by denoting a value judgment, reveal the greater weight they attach to the political factor in innovations. Ruediger (2002, p. 9), for example, argues that "limiting e-government to providing particular services to 'clients' would be a simplification" and advocates the need for a "more ambitious perspective" that enables "good" electronic government. In other words, a robust e-government would be one that paves the way for citizenship, for the participation of civil society. In this particular case, we can see how the author confronts what is, in our classification, the managerial approach, because he feels it is too limited.

If the existence of different e-government dimensions is an important point for the political perspective, it does not seem – at least not explicitly – fundamental in the managerial approach. Although some authors mention factors beyond technique, they do not view them from a political perspective, keeping them restricted to service management. By not distinguishing a political dimension to e-government, the studies that follow the managerial approach do not aim to discuss the relationship between e-government and democracy, and this term is rarely mentioned in the studies. A rare example is Tridapalli, Fernandes and Machado (2011), who mention electronic voting as an experience in the area of democracy. This field of research comprehends authors who dedicate mainly to the study of technology itself, its advances and how they can improve service delivery to citizens.

By examining the empirical material, we found that some articles did not fully fit into one or the other approach, but rather contained elements of both. This led us to create a third approach, called hybrid, since it would not be correct to place these articles in any of the previous two approaches.

These elements demonstrate the complexity of the issue: Even when technological artifacts are in place or ready to be implemented, public administration and civil society are not yet clearly prepared for a full experimentation of democracy via the internet. Neither one sphere nor the other extensively masters the rites a DD requires. Such barriers, however, should not be an argument for not enhancing digital practices with a potential to bring citizens and public agents closer together, even considering the difficulty of breaking with a structure that is still resistant to actually democratic impulses.

In order to clarify the discussion of what we call the managerial approach and the political approach, in the next section we examine papers by researchers of administration focusing on e-government and e-democracy.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this section is to present the methodology of analysis of the scientific output on the subject of DD in the field of Administration. The empirical corpus consisted of works published in Brazil from 2002 (when the first articles on the subject appear) to 2016, in journals ranked A1, A2 or B1 by Qualis for the 2013-2016 period – i.e.,

high-impact journals in Brazil –, with bases available on the Scielo platform in the area "Administration, Accounting and Tourism" of CAPES. More specifically, we selected articles related to Administration, Management, Public Policy or Information Systems. We found 48 journals within this scope. It is worth noting that we considered the area of the journal, rather than that of the paper's author.

The search was conducted on the journals' websites through the mechanisms available on each page and, if necessary, complemented by searches on Scielo and Google Scholar. In order to locate in these 48 journals the articles dealing with DD, the keywords adopted were: "digital democracy", "electronic democracy", "virtual democracy", "online democracy", "cyberdemocracy" , "democracy & Internet", "electronic government", "e-gov", "participation & Internet", "participation & digital", "participation & virtual", "participation & online", "Deliberation & Internet", "Deliberation & digital", "Deliberation & virtual", "Deliberation & online", "Public Sphere & Internet", "Public Sphere & digital", "Public Sphere & virtual", "Public Sphere & online", "e-transparency", "online transparency", "transparency & internet". As can be seen, we used a considerable number of descriptors in order to cover various possibilities of searching for academic output in this area, focusing on DD. Eventually, 49 articles were found which constitute the corpus analyzed below.

These texts were then read and classified into categories according to a codebook, using content analysis technique (Neuendorf,

2002). In the codebook, a protocol is built which mobilizes "keywords", "figures", "graphical representations", and other semiotic features of the analyzed medium. For this article, we worked only with the "keywords" previously fixed by the authors, based on the literature of the area as we consider that they were enough to capture the articles. Since this is not a literature review, but rather a study on the literature, content analysis is the most appropriate way to standardize the evaluation of different parts of the article. A similar strategy has been successfully adopted in research on internet and politics (Gomes, 2016; Sampaio et al., 2016) and on Electronic Government in Brazil (Przeybilovicz et al., 2015).

Thus, in each article, we noted: name of the journal, title, abstract, keywords, authors, authors' institutions and year of publication, i.e., objective information that does not depend on coder classification. Only the variable "approach" was selected to classify the text as a whole in relation to its content, whose categories were: Political (1), Managerial (2) and Hybrid (3). All data were tabulated in spreadsheets (.csv) and processed in Excel, SPSS statistical software and Nvivo qualitative analysis software.

RESULTS

As mentioned earlier, 49 articles were found in the journals surveyed, however, although the average is about one article per journal, the distribution is significantly concentrated in only seven journals, as shown in Graph 1. This means that most of the journals did not publish articles on the studied subject.

Graph 1. Distribution of papers published by journal
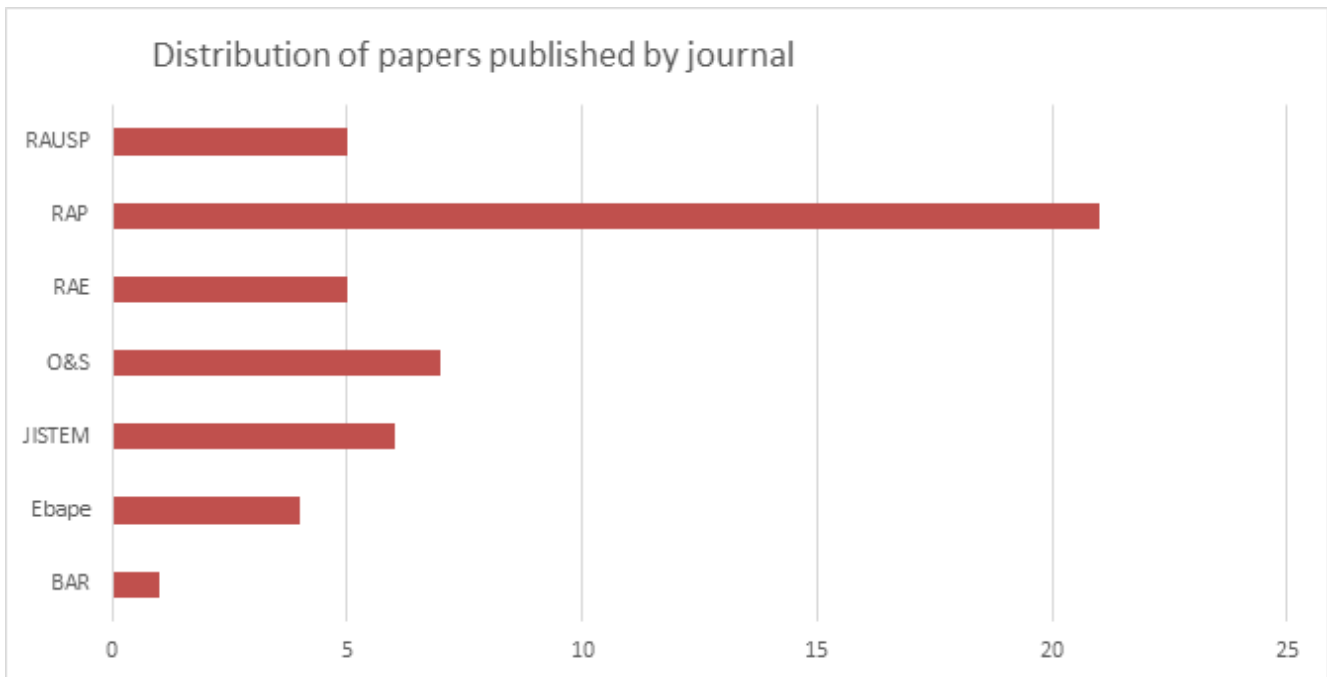
It is worth noting that the output on e-government and e-democracy is mostly concentrated in a single journal, the Revista de Administração Pública, which had 21 articles in the analyzed period (42% of the total). As can be seen in Graph 1, the next journals have close numbers: Organizações & Sociedade (7), Jistem (6), Revista de Administração da USP (5), Revista de Administração de Empresas (5) e Cadernos Ebape (4). In addition, of the 48 journals surveyed, only the seven listed in Graph 1 had any output on the topic in the last decade.

On the other hand, as shown in Graph 2, if we disregard 2014, the production in the area of Administration shows a growing curve, at least since 2008, which indicates greater interest and output by the area on the subject.

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Graph 2. Frequency of Articles by Year
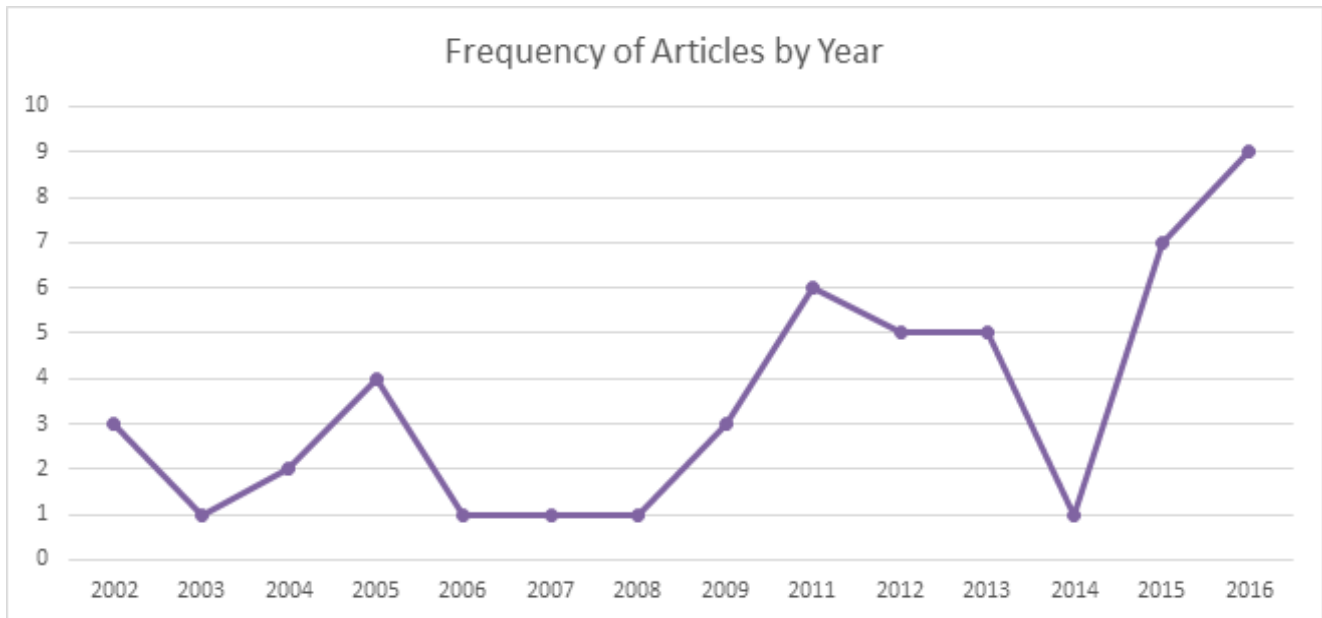
The 49 articles analyzed were produced by 91 authors, indicating a significant number of researchers interested in DD in the area of Administration. Data show that the great majority of authors published only one (n = 63) or at most two articles (n = 13). Only one author published three articles and another published six. These authors, in turn, were distributed over 32 educational and research institutions, meaning that most institutions presented only one or two papers. As shown in Graph 3 below, the output was mostly concentrated in the following institutions: FGV (n = 16), UFSC (11), UFBA (9), UnB (8), PUC-PR (6) and USP (6).

Graph 3. Most recurrent institutions in terms of published studies
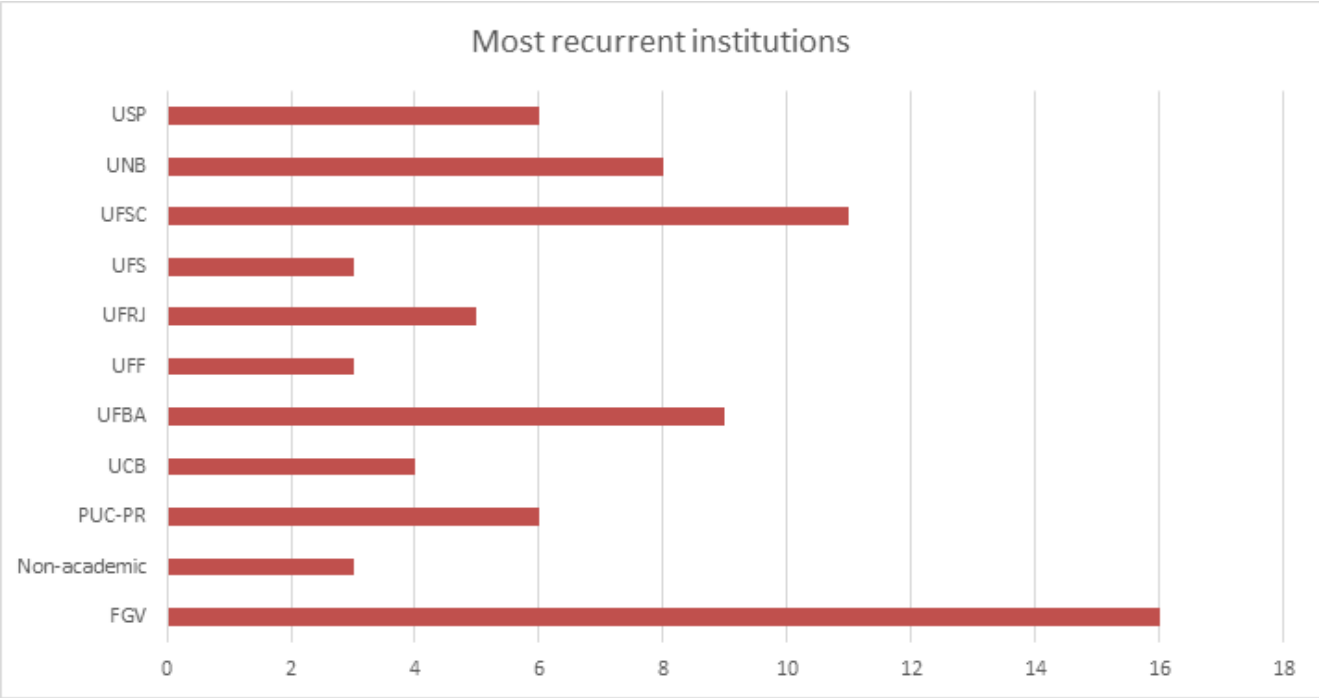
Next, with regard to the titles, we found that the term "digital democracy", as well as its correlates "e-democracy", "virtual democracy", "online democracy" and "cyberdemocracy" did not appear in the articles selected at least until 2011. By examining the word cloud created from the papers' titles, there is a clear predominance of "electronic government" over other DD terms. The term "government" and its derivatives appear 17 times in the titles, while the term "democracy" appears only five times.

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Figure 1: Word cloud based on the titles of the articles

In turn, we examined whether the keywords used could give us a better idea of the topics covered in the articles. Graph 4 clearly demonstrates how Administration's main concern lies with e-government, while any reference to "democracy" is in a distant second place. In fact, even if we add the occurrences of three keywords (5 + 4 + 4 = 13), the result is still below the most found keyword, Electronic Government, with 18 occurrences (repeating what we had found in the titles). It is also noteworthy that the word cloud is virtually identical in its central terms to that created from titles.
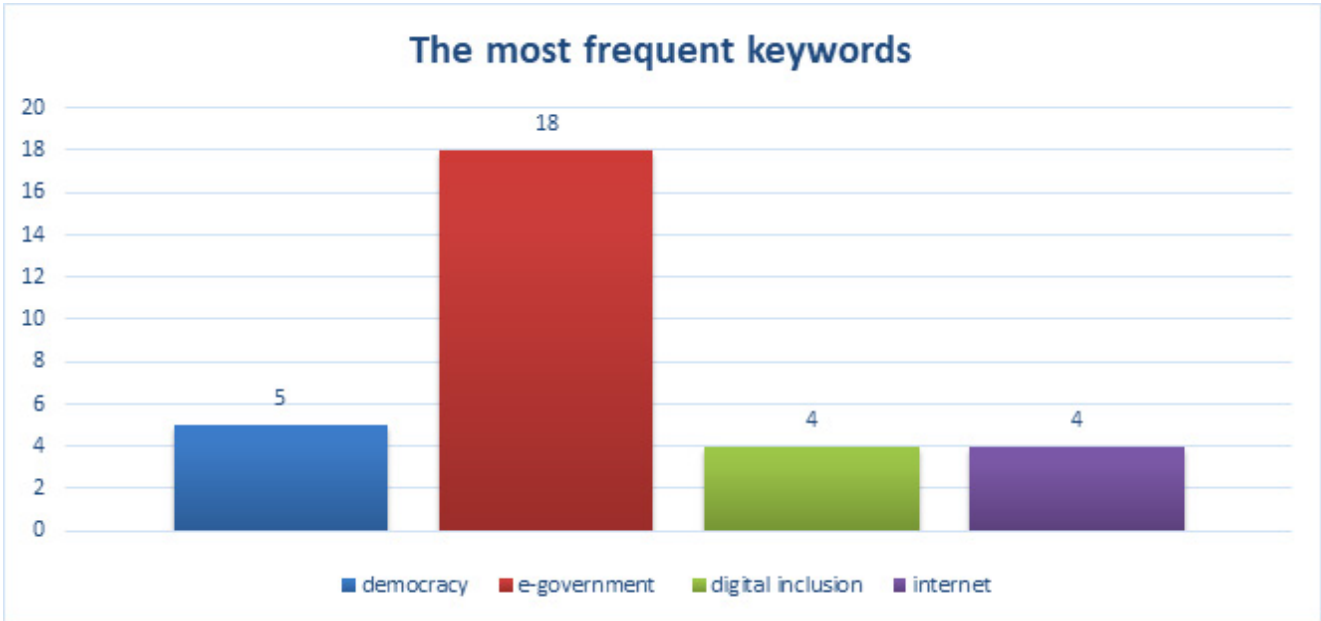
Graph 4. The most frequent keywords

Figure 2: Word cloud based on articles' keywords

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Cunha and Santos (2005) have argued that there is some confusion between the concepts of electronic government, electronic governance and DD. However, it is worth noting that 11 years after their article was published, the subject "digital democracy" still does not seem to have its conceptual and empirical dimensions extensively studied by the national scientific output in high-impact Administration journals. Importantly, the same does not occur with other knowledge areas such as Communication and Social Sciences, as shown by the study of Sampaio et al (2016).

This evidence enables two considerations.

First, Administration researchers may not yet be significantly mobilized on the topic of DD, although the analyses of some rely on discussing democracy. Secondly, discussions in Administration focus on electronic government, which has a more operational character, thus replicating the logic of reality in terms of Brazilian public management, which emphasizes the improvement of public administration processes without aiming at ruptures in the existing scenario.

Next, the selected articles were classified according to the "approach" categories presented earlier, i.e., managerial, political and hybrid, as shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1. Distribution of articles by approach

Political	managerial	Hybrid
Akutsu & Pinho (2002)	Ferreira & Neves (2002)	Inamine, Erdmann, & Marchi (2012)
Ruediger (2002)	Joia & Cavalcante (2004)	Pozzebon & Diniz (2012)
Ruediger (2003)	Rossetto, Orth, & Rossetto, (2004)	Teles & Joia (2012)
Cunha & Santos (2005)	Almeida & Paula (2005)	Cunha & Miranda (2013)
Medeiros & Guimarães (2005)	Filgueiras & Lorenzelli (2005)	Damian & Merlo (2013)
Medeiros & Guimarães (2006)	Rezende (2007)	Santos, Bernardes,
Pinho (2008)	Diniz et al. (2009)	Rover, &
Pinho (2011)	Freire, Castro, & Fortes (2009)	Mezzaroba (2013)
Raupp & Pinho (2011)	Joia (2009)	
Cruz, Ferreira, Silva, &	Ferneda, Alonso, & Braga (2011)	
Macedo (2012)	Laia (2011)	
Beuren, Moura, & Kloeppel (2013)	Laia et al. (2011)	
Raupp & Pinho (2013)	Tridapalli, Fernandes, & Machado (2011)	
Abreu & Pinho (2014)	Ifinedo (2012)	
Bernardes, Santos, & Rover (2015)	Oliveira & Pisa (2015)	
Rampelotto, Löbler, & Visentini (2015)	Reis, Dacorso, & Tenório (2015)	
Cunha, Coelho, & Pozzebon (2014)	Gonçalves et al. (2016)	
Freitas, Lima, & Lima (2015)	Vitoriano & Souza (2016)	
Silva & Rue (2015)		
Abreu (2016)		
Bolzan & Löbler (2016)		
Braga & Gomes (2016)		
Cruz, Silva, & Spinelli (2016)		
Mota, Bellini, Souza, &		
Oliveira (2016)		
Raupp & Pinho (2016)		
Sampaio (2016)		

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As shown in the chart above, 25 articles were classified in the Political Approach, 18 in the Managerial Approach and only six in the Hybrid Approach, as mentioned earlier.

After this classification, the distribution of scientific output according to the view adopted by the authors is shown in Table 1, also considering the distribution by journal.

Table 1. Distribution of articles by approach and journal

Journal	Political	Managerial	Hybrid	Total
BAR	0	0	1	1
Ebape	4	0	0	4
JISTEM	0	5	1	6
O&S	5	1	1	7
RAE	3	2	0	5
RAP	10	9	2	21
RAUSP	3	1	1	5
Total	25	18	6	49

Contrary to our initial expectations, articles with a political focus outnumber those with a managerial focus. In our overall assessment, it seems that the Administration area has treated the issue in stages. In the early years, the papers published when of the e-government discussion began, in 2002 and 2003, tended to take a political approach to the subject. In the intermediate period, particularly until 2011, a more managerial approach predominated.

A possible cause of this distribution is the enthusiastic character of early papers on the subject, motivated by expectations around the internet, which are soon replaced by more practical questions about its implementation in administrative and managerial terms. After 2011, the political debate seems to regain strength, possibly due to the emergence of more DD objects and cases, such as better developed transparency portals and also emblematic, robust and organic cases, such as the Participatory Digital Budget. In particular, 2015 and 2016 are emblematic of the growth of a more political-natured output in the area. Table 2 shows how this temporal evolution occurred in the area's output.

Table 2. Distribution of approaches by year

Year	Political	Managerial	Hybrid	Total
2002	2	1	0	3
2003	1	0	0	1
2004	0	2	0	2
2005	2	2	0	4
2006	1	0	0	1
2007	0	1	0	1
2008	1	0	0	1
2009	0	3	0	3
2011	2	**4**	0	6
2012	1	1	3	5
2013	2	0	3	5
2014	1	0	0	1
2015	**5**	2	0	7
2016	**7**	2	0	9
Total	25	18	6	49

Reinforcing what was outlined at the beginning of this article, we now present the differences between the two original approaches proposed with regard to aspects such as the potential contributions and challenges of e-government to democracy.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Results lead to four considerations on the leading output in Administration research about electronic government and DD. First, it is still a very restricted academic output (49 articles), basically concentrated in only seven Brazilian journals in the area, among the 48 available which are ranked B1 or higher (i.e., high-impact journals). This is in itself a strong indicator of how marginal the issue still is in the field of administration. Although a full comparison is not possible, the study of Sampaio et al. (2016), which analyzes articles at Communication and Social Scienc-es events, gives us an idea of the difference in width, since the authors found 526 articles on the subject by searching through keywords similar to those used in this research.

Secondly, although there are 91 authors involved, this concentration is repeated in terms of institutions, since six of them account for almost the entire corpus analyzed. Thirdly, as expected, our data indicate that Administration's greatest concern lies with e-government, while references to DD were absent until 2011, though implicit in some articles and growing stronger in recent case studies on transparency or participation.

Finally, contrary to our expectations, the output in general devoted more attention to the political approach (n = 25) than to the managerial approach (n = 18), although values are still close and there is a concentration of more political articles in the last five years,

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which may constitute a trend.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the road to DD passes through the managerial category. After all, any democratic development programs, processes or tools will require administrative decisions, bureaucratic procedures and the like. On the other hand, the idea of democratization often arises in managerially-oriented papers as equivalent to universal access to electronically provided government services. Thus, problems such as digital exclusion and website accessibility are commonly addressed by these authors.

However, the risks to democracy are not limited to unequal access to efficient government services, but to the fact that e-government is restricted to service delivery alone. Ruediger (2003) says that "being limited to service delivery equals failure to appropriate the potential to transform politics in the e-gov development process" (p. 9). In the same vein, Cunha and Santos (2005) criticize the fact that

> [...] Most efforts to incorporate the Internet into politics are geared to improving public management and, important as that may be, the problem lies in confining the use of the Internet in the political arena to the restrictive parameters of the managerial model. If we are satisfied with these limits, we are squandering Internet's main intrinsic virtue as a technological tool for democracy. (p. 8).

Interestingly, by cross-referencing the number of Political Approach articles (25) with the keywords, the term "democracy" appears only five times. Apparently, this could be a paradox, especially since the predomi-

nant keyword is e-government. However, as noted earlier, many articles deal with e-government, but from a more critical perspective, which brings them closer to a political discussion. Therefore, if the word democracy does not appear explicitly, it is embedded in the critique of a managerialist view.

At this point, it is important to clarify that the mismatch between the managerial and political approaches reflects the mismatch between the theoretical frameworks to which they are affiliated. In addition to the emergence of new technologies, which allowed the creation of new applications and services (Joia & Cavalcante, 2004), the managerial approach attributes the origins of electronic government in Brazil to State Reform processes (Laia, Cunha, Nogueira, & Mazzon, 2011). Indeed, topics that are frequent in the managerial perspective such as increased government efficiency and performance, cost reduction, transparency, increased control mechanisms, higher quality of accountability and redesigning of production processes among government levels, are common and consensual themes in the agenda of the State Reform discussion.

At the same time, embedded in the political approach's critique of the managerial perspective to e-government is the broader critique of state reform and the managerial model. This can be seen in the defense of an electronic government that opposes the "privatization of the public sphere" (Ruediger, 2003), with a whole arsenal of arguments that show concern with what the res publica is.

Finally, we propose four observations. The first is to realize that, since the distance between the number of Management Approach arti-

cles (18) and Political Approach ones (25) is not so great, the Administration area seems to embrace different approaches. However, there is interest and concern (especially in recent years) with regard to discussing the possibilities of digital democracy. Secondly, while articles categorized in the political approach rest on more constitutive aspects of democracy, they tend to lack a concern with conceptualizing DD itself. Third, the Hybrid Approach, though not predominant, seeks to address both sides, drawing on managerial as well as political arguments, which reveals the concern of its authors with using contributions from both approaches to understand the phenomenon that digital technologies present. Finally, recent concepts and concerns tend to require approaches that are more hybrid, as is the case with open government, open data and smart cities, which are strongly driven by democratic values such as participation and transparency. These values are significantly oriented towards bringing citizens closer to government, whether through forms of collaboration or more active forms of transparency, though equally dependent on managerial decisions in order to be properly implemented as they are State actions rather than actions of a particular administration.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of Administration research revealed that DD is not yet consolidated as a subject among researchers in the area, and that reflections on electronic government and/or democracy in general and not digital democracy predominate. We can also see, particularly in more recent studies, that a political approach to the subject has prevailed, which transcends the initial focus, more re-

lated to State Reform. A major reason for this may be that State Reform has lost centrality over more than a decade, and thus the discussion of democracy, as well as its digital epithet, has gained greater consistency. Thus, we can see that the contributions of e-government for democracy extend beyond increasing the efficiency of government service delivery. In any case, we found that the political approach to management predominates, indicating that if digital democracy itself is not the main result of our study, there is an engagement in the area of Politics to investigate the area of Administration under the subject in question, which indicates that the latter is moving closer to DD.

Taking the scope of our study as a parameter, the concept of DD is rarely explored by studies with a political approach which advocate, in addition to focusing on efficiency, the potential of e-government for expanding democracy. It was not until 2011 that studies focusing on DD emerged, which shows that the concept, as said in the beginning, is still under construction and, we know this from experience, its maturation is slow. On the other hand, it must be made clear that the area has been developing analyses from a political perspective by addressing participatory experiences on various public policy issues, such as health, education, the environment, executive branch budgeting (e.g., PPAs and participatory budgets), public consultations, among others. In other words, the area does not avoid political analyses as it embraces manifestations in various areas of the public sector.

In addition, it should be considered that Administration as a field of knowledge is born with a focus primarily on management,

whether in the public or private sector, with a view to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its services, especially within organizational structures. Thus, while the introduction of internet in Brazil is recent, incorporating this reflection into Administration scholars' research agenda is even more so. Considering the relationship between the current features of research in Administration and the theoretical issues discussed, we propose as the object of future research some reflections on the possibilities of DD in face of the limitations of "non-virtual democracy" in Brazil.

If previous efforts to modernize public administration, as well as broader changes in political structures, were not successful in eradicating patrimonialism, thus showing the resistance of this phenomenon and its adequacy to the interests of dominant groups (Pinho, 2016), what are the possibilities of the technological modernization represented by e-government in a preliminary level of DD in face of that very patrimonialism? Since the macrostructural elements of democracy in the country have not significantly changed, DD seems to be more of a promise than an actual advance in democracy building in Brazil. That does not mean we are not advancing in this area, as emphasized above, not least because there is a significant technological imperative in the country today.

Nevertheless, the most recent political-approach studies are beginning to indicate more structuring change in public administration with regard to DD features. By way of example, several studies in the corpus analyzed here dealt with the Digital Participatory Budgeting (OPD) of the city of Belo

Horizonte. (Abreu & Pinho, 2014; Cunha et al., 2014; Sampaio, 2016). Nabuco, Macedo and Ferreira (2009) demonstrate the need for a series of managerial decisions in order to implement it, but they stress its goal of incrementing the value of popular participation. Similarly, some objects more in line with DD proposals, such as the Rio Grande do Sul state government's Digital Office (Aggio & Sampaio, 2014) and the House of Representatives e-Democracy project (Faria, Rehbein, & Sathler, 2016), practically absent from our empirical corpus, indicate the possibility of innovation in the public sector driven or demanded by digital initiatives.

All these examples point to cultural changes in the bureaucracy and administration of public affairs that are strongly driven by democratic values. In other words, the managerial approach is fundamental to any DD project, especially in order for them to be regarded as policies of State and no longer as policies of a particular administration.

It seems to us that, in certain situations, public managers and politicians are willing to take the risk with digital democratic innovations, and it is the Administration research agenda that may be ignoring existing cases, as indicated in our article. Therefore, we believe there is a demand and a need for the area to pay more attention to such DD efforts, as well as the need for this academic output to spread more widely across the area, both in terms of research institutions and in relation to journals.

Finally, we must point out limitations of this study, as well as indications for future research. With regard to limitations, we can see that, since we focused on the state of the art

in Brazil and in the area of Administration, our corpus was restricted to journals, thus excluding books on the subject; moreover only national publications were surveyed, thus excluding foreign journals. It also seems pertinent to update the survey by covering the 2017-2018 period so as to confirm the trends detected in this survey. As for future research, it should be noted that technology moves rapidly, and artifacts that did not exist a few years ago are now present and even gaining centrality, which may open avenues for greater participation, though we are still faced with the fact, as we have stressed in this study, that the speed of democracy is slower than the advance of technology.

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