

# On the political organization of social work: the critical turn in the context of bourgeois autocracy

*Da organização política do Serviço Social: a virada crítica no contexto da autocracia burguesa*

Carina Berta Moljo\* 

Maria Elizabeth S. Borges\*\* 

Ana Luiza Avelar de Oliveira\*\*\* 

Maria Inês Souza Bravo\*\*\*\* 

## ABSTRACT

This article highlights key developments in the research project titled “The Political Organization of the Social Work Professional Category in Brazil and the Critical Turn in the Entities,” which methodology in the first stage of the research consists of literature, bibliographic, and documentary review. Our working hypothesis is that the “critical turn” and the establishment of what is referred to as the Ethical-Political-Professional Project were made possible by the organizational efforts of the professional category, particularly in the struggle for ethical-political leadership within Brazilian social work organizations. This process, which began in the 1960s and 1970s, evolved concurrently among vanguards connected to universities and the labor movement. We aim to illustrate how this process has influenced national entities, which view their alignment with social struggles as essential for advancing the democratization of Brazilian society through various forms of worker organization.

**Keywords:** Critical Renewal of Social Work; political organization; ethical-political direction.

## RESUMO

O artigo apresenta uma parte dos avanços do projeto de pesquisa denominado “A organização política da categoria profissional do serviço social no Brasil e a virada crítica nas entidades”, cuja metodologia na primeira etapa da pesquisa consiste em revisão da literatura, revisão bibliográfica e documental. Nossa hipótese de trabalho é que a “virada crítica” e a construção do que chamamos Projeto ético-político-profissional foram possíveis pelo processo organizativo da categoria profissional, na disputa pela direção ético-política das organizações do Serviço Social brasileiro. Este processo, iniciado ainda nos anos de 1960-1970, se deu, simultaneamente, entre as vanguardas vinculadas às universidades e ao sindicalismo. Neste momento, nos atentamos para demonstrar as implicações deste processo nas entidades nacionais articuladas, que assumem como importante e fundamental a aproximação das lutas sociais, em prol da democratização da sociedade brasileira, nas diversas formas de organização da classe trabalhadora.

**Palavras-chave:** Renovação Crítica do Serviço Social; organização política; direção ético-política.

## ARTICLE

<https://doi.org/10.12957/rep.2025.89040>

\*Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Juiz de Fora, MG - Brasil.  
E-mail: carinamoljo@uol.com.br.

\*\*Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA), Salvador, BA - Brasil.  
E-mail: bethborges@gmail.com.

\*\*\*Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Juiz de Fora, MG - Brasil.  
E-mail: anaavelar.oliveira@ufjf.br.

\*\*\*\*Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), Rio de Janeiro, RJ - Brasil. E-mail: msouzabravo@gmail.com.

How to cite: MOLJO, C. B.; BORGES, M. E. S.; OLIVEIRA, A. L. A. de; BRAVO, M. I. S. On the political organization of social work: the critical turn in the context of bourgeois autocracy. *Em Pauta: teoria social e realidade contemporânea*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 23, n. 58, pp. 55-68, jan./maio, 2025. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.12957/rep.2025.89040>.

Received on August 28, 2024.

Approved for publication on September 20, 2024.

Responsible for final approval: Monica de Jesus César.



© 2025 The Revista Em Pauta: Teoria Social e Realidade Contemporânea is licensed under a License Creative Commons Atribuição 4.0 Internacional

## Introduction

This article aims to share part of an ongoing research focused on the political organization of the social work professional category in Brazil. This research is part of a network that connects researchers from different countries in Latin America and Europe, entitled *Social Work in History: Social Issues and Social Movements – Latin America and Europe (1960-2020)*.

The central hypothesis of the study is that the construction of the social leadership, currently hegemonic, was made possible in large part by the strength of the political organization of the category over the last 40 years, characterized by the unity between academic training and professional practice. Based on the methodology adopted<sup>1</sup>, the research seeks to answer the following question: what determinations allowed the construction of the hegemony of critical social direction in professional social work entities, articulating work and professional training?

This process, which began in the 1960s and 1970s, developed simultaneously between the vanguards linked to universities and the trade union movement. The research seeks to highlight the role of these articulated national entities, which consider it crucial to approach social struggles in favor of the democratization of Brazilian society, through the different forms of organization of the working class, and how this connection aligns and is reflected in the fundamental principles of social work.

In this presentation, we prepared a synthesis of the bibliographical review carried out, locating the historical process of national social work entities in order to present the elements of Brazilian reality in the period corresponding to the “Congress of the Turn,” which support our hypothesis.

We divide the presentation into two parts: in the first, we establish the meaning of bourgeois autocracy, mainly for education policies in Brazil; we searched for this concept, recovering the elaborations of Netto (2008). In the second, we highlight the political organization of the professional category in the context of this autocracy, especially in the academic debate, considering the articulations that were developing at the Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research in Social Work (ABEPSS), at the *Centro Latino-americano de Trabajo Social* (CELATS), from the more general articulation with the labor and student movement, and later at the Federal Council of Social Work (CFESS). As conclusive approaches, we highlight some points that should be deepened in the subsequent phase of the ongoing research.

---

1 In the first stage of the research, we will carry out a bibliographical review, a review of existing literature, and a documentary analysis. If necessary, we will carry out interviews with actors considered key in this process.

## The meaning of bourgeois autocracy

As is widely known, in 2024 we are “uncelebrating” the 60th anniversary of the April 1964 Brazilian coup d’état. Without a doubt, it was a period of struggles for hegemony, in an international context of profound political and economic transformations. According to Ianni (1981), in the period between 1961 and 1964, a profound crisis of hegemony occurred in Brazil, with the political rise of workers and peasants, intensifying the dispute between groups of the bourgeoisie and the João Goulart administration. In this context of political crisis and economic crisis, a crisis of hegemony began, in which, through the coup d’état, the option for dependent capitalism, determined by big financial and monopolistic capital, came to fruition.

According to Fernandes (1981, p. 319), the dominant classes carried out a civil-military coup in the country, completing the “cycle of the Bourgeois Revolution, but under and within dependent capitalism,” increasing imperialist domination over the country with the objective of “stripping bourgeois domination of any real connection, which was substantively and operationally democratic-bourgeois and nationalist-bourgeois,” in order to neutralize “the specifically democratic and nationalist pressures of the more or less radical sectors of the bourgeoisie” and repress “pressures for economic, social, and political equality or for national integration and class mobilization of the popular masses.”

As Ianni (1981, p. 34) states, “faced with the possibility of forming a popular-based government, or the possibility of revolutionary outbreaks, with a worker and peasant base,” the most reactionary national forces, linked to imperialism, organized and carried out a coup.

According to Netto (2008), the April coup was an attempt by the national dominant groups to guarantee the maturation of Brazil’s insertion into the dynamics of monopolies, representing the massacre of democratic forces and the conduction of society’s directive processes, determined “from above.” In the bourgeois autocratic context, there is a deepening of the heteronomous features of Brazilian capitalism, with the state intervening directly in the economy to transfer income to monopolies and politically mediating conflicts for the strategic benefit of transnational corporations.

For the author (2008), bourgeois autocracy in Brazil can be understood from three moments: the first of them (between 1964 and 1968) is marked by the search for a social base of support that would sustain the dictatorship’s initiatives; a second moment (between 1968 and 1974), in which there was the conversion of what until then was a reactionary dictatorship to a political regime with clear fascist characteristics; and a third (between 1974 and 1979) characterized by the deepening of the crisis of the “miracle” and by the strategy articulated by Geisel, known as the “distension process,” which represented a self-reform project. This project aimed to reconstruct a sociopolitical bloc, with

the aim of guaranteeing the lasting institutionalization of the system of economic-social and political relations, to the benefit of the monopolies (Netto, 2008).

In this way, it is considered that the establishment of the bourgeois autocratic coup constituted a preventive counter-revolution, in order to maintain the bases of dependence on external capital, deepening the link between the Brazilian economy and imperialist interests. According to Chauí (2001, p. 41-42):

The dictatorship, since the 1964 coup d'état, has given itself three tasks: national integration (the consolidation of the nation against its fragmentation and dispersion into regional interests), national security (against the internal and external enemy, i.e. the repressive action of the state in the class struggle), and national development (along the lines of Western Christian democratic nations, that is, capitalists). These ideas were disseminated in schools with the subject of moral and civic education, on television with programs such as "Amaral Neto, the reporter" and those from Televisão Educativa, and on the radio through "Hora do Brasil" and Mobral (Brazilian Literacy Movement), responsible, on one hand, for ensuring qualified labor for the new job market and, on the other, for destroying the Paulo Freire Method of literacy.

Netto (2008) states that the objectives of the preventive counterrevolution were clear, indicating a triple purpose. In addition to the economic objectives of Brazil's subaltern insertion in the international economy, adapting national and group of countries' development patterns to the framework marked by a greater pace and depth of internationalization of capital, it was about striking the sociopolitical protagonists who were vying for hegemony for a more progressive Brazil, continuing with the basic reforms underway since 1961, or on the contrary, a Brazil dependent on external capital; as well as dynamizing in all areas the tendencies that could be mobilized against the revolution and socialism.

Thus, in this unequal dispute, the autocratic bourgeois state severely repressed groups and classes organized or in the process of organizing. It is no coincidence that under the doctrine of national security, some political parties, unions, student movements, among others, were banned. Let us remember that it was part of a process of synchronized coups throughout Latin America sponsored by the United States, in the context of the Cold War, with the advancement of resistance movements and the intensification of class struggles (Netto, 1996).

It is, then, from this context that the maturation of Brazil's insertion in the global monopoly dynamics occurred, maintaining the traces of heteronomy and dependence on national capitalism. According to Netto (1996), the bourgeois autocratic state installed from 1964 onwards led to a model of "conservative modernization," benefiting specific national groups and large international capital.

Therefore, it is considered that the defense and expansion of this project occurred through the alignment of several vectors, be they economic, social, political, cultural, or ideological. As for the educational system, especially in relation to universities, since the second half of the 1960s, it needed to meet two priorities of the bourgeois autocracy, namely the repression of democratic and popular tendencies, at the political level, as well as the viability of its modernizing project.

According to Netto (1996), there needed to be functional compatibility between the dictatorship's set of social policies and educational policy, which needed to be aligned with a model of socioeconomic and political development subordinated to the interests of the dominant elites, who organized themselves to exclude from the political scene the protagonists committed to democratic and popular projects.

For political reasons, it is considered that the refunctionalization of the educational system “was framed” within the dictatorial project of excluding the mass of people from the direction of social life, with the aim of controlling the instruments and spaces for organizing students and teachers at universities. This included the repression of movements and leaders that sought or implemented alternatives aimed at the democratization of politics, educational system, and educational processes, in connection with the basic needs of the population (Netto, 1996).

With the labor and union movement, both urban and rural, subjected to coercion, it is the student movement (particularly in universities, but not only in them) that took the lead in contesting the regime. The concern with the agitation of the student vanguards occurred due to its potential catalytic effect, tending to concentrate the general opposition that the regime was trying to keep dispersed. This concentration occurred in a social segment that, by becoming radicalized and drastically moving away from the April winning coalition, could trigger a social-political dynamic that would actually represent a serious threat to the regime, including recreating the conditions for a possible resurgence of the labor and union movement (Netto, 1996).

This means that the central point of the educational policy during the dictatorship was the neutralization and intensification of political resistance and criticism, especially in public universities linked to social class movements. This objective was achieved through repression and a “modernizing” management, strongly influenced by business logic, which distanced universities from social life and processes. As a result, universities lost their critical dynamism, while research and intellectual work were emptied. This culminated in the suppression, persecution, and exile of important intellectual fronts of democratic resistance (Netto, 1996).

During this period, measures were adopted that directly impacted higher education, causing a degradation of the university system, as well as the process of privatization of



education, opening its financing to external capital. Amaral (2019, p. 99) highlights, among the measures adopted by the military government, “the agreements, commonly known as ‘MEC-USAID Agreements,’ which had the effect of placing the educational problem in the general structure of domination, reoriented since 1964, and giving an objective and practical meaning to this structure.”

However, it is important to highlight that despite, and contrary to, what the bourgeois autocracy expected, even in the domesticated university of the dictatorship, critical aspects, albeit timidly, were emerging (Netto, 1996). In the case of social work, which enters the university world during this period, this change implied a new professional culture, with debates and conflicts little known until then. According to Netto (1996), entering the university implied leaving the monolithism, in which the profession found itself, to a process of differentiating conceptions of the profession and, therefore, of the world, tensioning the different ways of understanding and intervening in reality.

For the author (Netto, 1996, p. 135-136), the great milestone of the process of Renewal of Social Work in Brazil was the secularization of the profession, presenting four fundamental characteristics:

The establishment of theoretical, ideological, and political pluralism in the professional framework, displacing a solid tradition of ideal monolithism; the increasing differentiation of professional conceptions (nature, functions, object, objectives, and practices of social work), derived from the diversified use of alternative theoretical-methodological matrices, breaking with the bias that professionalism would imply a homogeneity (identity) of visions and practices; the harmony of the professional theoretical-methodological controversy with the ongoing discussions in the social sciences as a whole, inserting social work into contemporary academic and cultural dialogue as a protagonist that tries to break away from the (intellectual) subalternity posed by merely executive functions; the creation of avant-garde segments, mainly but exclusively inserted in academic life, focused on investigation and research.

Thus, he understands the Renewal of Social Work as a global process, which brought profound changes, both in training and in professional work, as bourgeois autocracy began its process of erosion. The so-called “turn” in the profession resulted, therefore, from a process articulated with the resistance movements present in Brazilian society, which, without a doubt, had repercussions on organizational bodies.

## **The “turn” as a process and the repercussions on class entities**

Taking as a landmark the 3rd Brazilian Congress of Social Workers (CBAS), held in 1979, in the city of São Paulo, social work in Brazil began what we call the Ethical-Po-

litical-Professional Project. This became known as the “Congress of the Turn,” as it managed to link the profession to the interests of the working class. Since then, the CBASs began to play an articulating role, mobilizing the category involved in professional work with those linked to academia and intellectual and political leaders.

We place this milestone in the context of Brazilian society in which the longest business-military dictatorship was ongoing, as explained in the previous item. But as phenomena are not one-dimensional, society was not inert and the struggle was expressed in social movements, including academic ones. The events of the 3rd CBAS resulted from political processes that involved the professional category and that erupted with the questioning of the dynamics of its organization and the proposed theme, which went against the mobilizations and struggles of the working class in the period, in the outbreak of strikes and denunciations of living conditions, repression, and obscurantism led by the military in power. The movement linked to debates in the union field expressed criticism of dictatorship administrations and the struggle and resistance to the exploitation of the working class. The model of class-based and autonomous unionism was germinating, which motivated the organizational movement of the professional category.

At that time, social workers recognized themselves as workers, in their salaried condition and organized themselves by actively participating in mobilizations and strikes, in addition to contributing to the organization of public service workers, who until 1988 could not, by law, organize themselves into unions. In 1978, the 1st National Meeting of Social Workers Union Entities took place in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, with the participation of four reorganized entities: Professional Associations of Social Workers (APAS) from São Paulo, Bahia, and Goiás, and the Union of Social Workers from Minas Gerais. This meeting decided to carry out a national research on salaries, working conditions, and working hours of social workers, to mobilize professionals from their workplaces for the union struggle (Abramides, 2016).

Until this period, CBASs were organized by the Federal Council of Social Workers (CFAS) and the local Regional Council of Social Workers (CRAS). The movement of change, which took place in the 1979 Congress, resulted from the mobilization carried out by members of the National Executive Committee of Social Workers Union Entities (CENEAS), in conjunction with teachers who were carrying out the renewal movement at the Brazilian Association of Teaching in Social Work (ABESS), combined with the dissatisfaction of participants expressed in the work groups. In the period prior to the Congress, the 1st Continuing Training Meeting was held in Rio de Janeiro, and the 3rd National Meeting of Social Workers Union Entities took place the week before the congress, when CENEAS was created. Both events were sponsored by CELATS and were strategic for the turning point.

During the CBAS, in an assembly heavily attended by social workers and students, significant changes were made, such as: honoring all the workers who fought and died for democratic freedoms; changes to the schedule, both in the content to be covered and the components of the tables and panels; inclusion of a final closing table with the participation of union leaders and social movements.

The contradictions of that political, social, and economic context were present. Part of the category linked to party and union debates put into discussion the living conditions of the impoverished population and the elitist gains of the economic-social development project managed by the military in the executive branch. The union organization, which generally transformed the APAS into social workers' unions, was linked to the workers' movement in the 1970s. The proposition then was the democratization of the category's entities, the identification of social workers as workers, and with this, the expression of class commitment.

From that historic moment on, the category followed a new direction. In 1981, the year the Workers' Party (PT) was founded, the 1st National Conference of the Working Classes (CONCLAT) was held, which brought together around five thousand delegates from across the country in the municipality of Praia Grande, São Paulo. It was the first major inter-union meeting held in Brazil since 1964, which decided to create the National Pro-CUT Commission. The Unified Workers' Central (CUT) was founded in 1983, the same year as the creation of the National Association of Social Workers (ANAS), which joined the new Central, which presented the union's conception by branch of activity.

From a training point of view, organization took place through ABESS, focusing on leading an academic curriculum compatible with the desires of a category that sought to take a stand against processes of alienation and exploitation, while articulating with Latin American organizations to build a critical formation.

According to Bravo et al. (2019), the articulation between young teachers from various courses in the country, who identified themselves from the master's courses in social work, began a process of debate regarding professional training. The need for its change led to the movement that took place at ABESS, in 1970s, to stimulate debate. Following four conventions, decisions promoted significant changes that gave new democratic outlines to the entity.

In 1973, in São Luís, Maranhão, the first change occurred in relation to the name of the entity, which became known as the Brazilian Association of Teaching in Social Work, instead of the "Brazilian Association of Schools of Social Work", guaranteeing the possibility of teachers participating in the Convention, keeping the right to vote in the General Assembly not only to representatives of the management of affiliated units. The other important event was the presentation of the curricular proposal by the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PUC-MG), by professor Leila Lima Santos, linked to



the perspective of Latin American Reconceptualization, which aimed to build critical professional training aiming to overcome the theoretical-methodological and ideological supports inherited from conservative thought.

In 1975, in Piracicaba, São Paulo, the discussion of the academic curricular project for Brazilian social work continued. At this convention there were tense debates and it was decided that by the next convention the teaching units should produce a new proposal, which would surpass the one currently in force, approved in 1970 by the Federal Education Council (CFE) and which would present unifying alternatives for the disciplines on Case, Group, and Community Social Work (Raizer, 2024). In 1979, in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, the different trends in the professional environment were expressed, with a pluralistic emphasis, with a significant theoretical and ideological clash between antagonistic positions in relation to the orientation of professional training (Bravo et al., 2019). The density of this process resulted in the proposal of a curriculum that represented a great advance for the time, reflecting the correlation of forces existing at that time. In 1981, the historic Convention held in Vitória, Espírito Santo took place, which democratized the entity, with the change of its statute, expanding participation in the General Assembly to students, field supervisors, and teachers, including the right to vote in the election for the board of directors of the entity.

These changes impacted the entity's social base, bringing new important social subjects in professional training to debate. The management of ABESS, assumed by Professor Josefa Batista Lopes (Federal University of Maranhão – UFMA), redefined the entity as a training space, in the broadest sense of the term. During this period, other events related to undergraduate teaching and research took place. Important achievements in this period included: the proposal of the action-research project called *Professional training in Brazil: historical determinants and perspectives (1982-1985)*, at the 1st National Meeting of Teaching in Social Work, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1982; the 1st National Meeting of Research in Social Work in São Luís, Maranhão, which began to give visibility to existing research centers/groups in Brazil; and the announcement of the first research financing by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

From 1985 onwards, ABESS developed new and diverse ways of contributing to the debate regarding the training and professional practice of social workers and research in social work. In addition to its conventions, the following were promoted: National Postgraduate Meetings; Undergraduate and Researcher Meetings; National Seminars on the Pedagogical Project; and Research on Teaching Methodology in Social Work. These achievements were published in the “ABESS Notebooks,” from 1986 onwards, by Cortez Editora.

At the Fortaleza Convention, in 1987, the entity's general assembly approved the creation of the Center for Documentation and Research in Social Policies and Social

Work (CEDEPSS), an academic body of ABESS, which had been recommended at the 3rd National Meeting of Research in Social Work, held in Campinas, São Paulo, in 1986. The construction of CEDEPSS was the strategy carried out by progressive teachers to guarantee unity in training and avoid the creation of *another* postgraduate entity.

The debates that began in the 1970s, continuing in the 1980s, indicated the deepening and the intellectual and political maturity carried out by the entity's management, to inaugurate in the 1990s a set of fundamental changes in the direction of professional training. The Convention held in 1993 in Londrina, Paraná approved the discussion proposal for curriculum review. In 1996, the new National Curricular Guidelines were approved at the Assembly held in Rio de Janeiro. In 1998, at a convention held in Recife, Pernambuco, the entity was renamed the Brazilian Association of Teaching and Research in Social Work (ABEPSS), incorporating CEDEPSS.

Since the “turn”, it was no longer possible to keep the professional councils distanced from the reality of the working class, and the movement to take them over to build an ethical-political proposition grew. In general terms, in the 1980s, the agenda was focused on: the direct election for the Federal Council, which previously was indirect, through the Regional councils; the politicization of its management; the reformulation of the Code of Ethics and the regulatory Law and for the articulation of academic debate with the practice of the profession.

The historic turn that was taking place in the unions, in ABESS and in the student movement, forced the councils to change the composition of the management. Social workers, until then linked to other spaces of social and political struggle, began to contribute to this process, which was not isolated from what was happening in the country's reality, with the dictatorship being exposed and weakening, opening space for redemocratization movements of the state and its institutions, mobilizing the ethical-political awareness of Brazilian society.

In 1986, a new Code of Ethics was demanded by the category, under the influence of the changes taking place in Brazilian society with hopes mobilized for the overthrow of the dictatorship and reconstruction of the legal-normative system, whether in relation to the National Constituent Assembly, formed with elected parliamentarians for this purpose, whether in relation to the profession's own normative framework. This Code had a great merit, which was the break with the conservatism of the profession, keeping a refinement regarding ethical-political values and commitments, unfolding with the promulgation of the current Code of Ethics in 1993 and with the new Regulation Law of the profession (Law 8662/93).

As for the student movement, there are few easily accessible records. We highlight, in particular, the studies by Sâmia Ramos on the social work student organization.

We know that the movement, in general, has moments of articulation and action and others of crisis, since the 1960s, when students joined groups resisting the military regime and, for this reason, their leaders were persecuted. According to Ramos and Santos (1997), in the late 1970s, the National Union of Students (UNE) rearticulated the movement, resurfacing as an organized youth, with leaders linked to left-wing political parties. They held congresses again, where the national debate on the social role of the student movement took place. Still within the scope of UNE, among its strategies, course sessions were created, to guarantee daily presence at universities.

For the social work course, the organization called Subsecretariat of Social Work Students of UNE (SESSUNE) held the 1st National Meeting of Social Work Students (ENESS) in 1978. Since then, discussions led to the creation of a national entity of its own. According to Ramos and Santos (1997, p. 158):

The process of creating the national entity of social work students was democratically discussed and matured in various student forums and grassroots entities, providing reflection on the very need for its creation and a deeper understanding of what would be its objectives and organizational structure, (...) created in 1986 at ENESS in Rio de Janeiro, still as SESSUNE.

For the authors (1997), despite experiencing difficulties in the organizational process, the movement of social work students remained active, holding annual national meetings, having maintained the organizational dynamics within universities (or schools), articulating specific themes from professional training with the more general struggles of the working class and the democratization of society, defined as strategic in terms of ideological and cultural dispute.

In 1993, the name was changed to National Executive of Social Work Students (ENESSO), “approved in the final plenary of the 15th ENESS (Rio Grande do Sul), seeking autonomy in relation to UNE and determining intervention in the sphere of professional training” (Ramos and Santos, 1997, pp. 160-161). It is important to highlight that the statutory project outlined the articulation with entities in the category and, especially, the creation of the National Coordination of Student Representation within the management of ABEPSS. ENESSO, in an articulated way and building strategic unity, has deepened its political-organizational legacy and advanced what has become a reference for the critical perspective of social work.

As the authors record (1997, p. 165):

ENESSO, as a channel of collective expression for social work students, constitutes one of the collective subjects present in the political-professional scenario in the 80s and 90s which, alongside other entities representing the category, has been actively participating in discussions and struggles of social workers.

In our view, the political articulation of the three national entities (Joint CFESS-CRESS, ABEPSS, and ENESSO) is a field of important force in joint actions of intervention in society, in the face of facts that compromise democracy, social justice, and human rights. Specifically in the profession, this articulation affirms the inseparability between teaching-research-extension, the centrality of the supervised internship, undergraduate and postgraduate integration, the relationship between training and professional work, political action in defense of public policies, and political organization, including at the international level, especially in Latin America.

The Code of Ethics (1993), the Regulatory Law (1993), and the Curricular Guidelines (1996) express the ethical-political direction based on the commitment to emancipatory values, leading entities to assume a significant role in the field of political organization. These instruments have been contributing to the professional category, in the construction of agendas linked to social movements in defense of democratic freedoms, human diversity, and social and human rights, in a growing accumulation of significant experiences, strengthening civil society in the defense of non-corporate struggles, giving visibility to critical positions on the country's social reality, seeking to increase the strength of workers. In the space of 30 years, they continue to be current in relation to new agendas in defense of democratic freedoms, inside and outside the profession.

## Final considerations

These conclusions are not categorical, since the research is still ongoing, seeking to understand the concrete determinations and connections that allowed the construction of the hegemony of critical social direction in professional social work entities in Brazil. We consider the milestone “Congress of the Turn” as a fundamental moment, which can express a more general movement in Brazilian society, mainly the role of trade unions in the fight for the democratization of Brazilian society. Social workers were also present in social movements and workers' organizations, experiencing significant growth in understanding Brazilian reality and the role of social work in workers' struggles for better living and working conditions.

As revealed in our studies, the 3rd CBAS was a moment of confluence in the organizational process in the late 1970s, in resistance to the business-military dictatorship, leading social work entities to reposition themselves regarding the theoretical-political direction of academic and professional and in disputes between professional projects, starting to assume an important role in the course of the democratization of social relations in Brazil.

These entities broke with bureaucratic and corporate structures, building a field of important force. The strategic unity between them, since the 1980s, in social struggles, in

research and knowledge production, reaches the 1990s with theoretical-political maturity, by building collective strategies, not giving in to fads present in the humanities and social sciences or in the fields of work. The inseparable relationship between work and professional training has been fruitful in joint actions, in the production and dissemination of knowledge, in the relationship with matters of interest to the professional category, and in the defense of human and social rights.

Since Brazil is a continental country, this strategic construction, both in work and professional training, took place in the regional diversity that characterizes it. The national and international dynamics also show the gains from a critical perspective, in the dispute with conservative projects, and Brazilian social work has been a reference in this. Political unity results from the conception of profession, respecting the autonomy of each organization and also recognizing the leading role of the student movement.

As noted, political strategies went beyond the endogenous form of the profession, expanding its relations with society and ensuring the legitimacy of national entities, which have expressed critical positions and propositions that support professional work, but not only that, as they express a democratic direction, differentiating themselves in spaces of political representation, in the defense of rights and in the fight against all forms of exploitation, domination and oppression.

Our research is part of a broader investigation into the profession in the history of Latin America, Europe, and recently Africa. Therefore, other dimensions will be addressed when transversalizing the findings of each subgroup, but certainly an important aspect to be highlighted is the project of critical training, guided by the dialectical-Marxian method and approaches from the Marxist tradition, which allowed the debate on the profession to be deepened, understanding its historical meaning, its insertion in capitalist social relations, and assuming an ethical-political direction, in growing intellectual and political maturity.

**Contributions:** All authors worked on the preparation, analysis and final version of the article.

**Acknowledgements:** Maurilio de Castro Matos and Esther de Souza Lemos, researchers from the research group who actively participated in the preparation of the questions presented in this article.

**Funding agency:** not applicable

**Approval by Ethics Committee:** not applicable

**Conflict of interests:** not applicable



## References

ABEPSS. Associação Brasileira de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social. Diretrizes Curriculares do Curso de Serviço Social. In: *Cadernos ABESS nº7*. São Paulo: Cortez Editora, 1997.

ABRAMIDES, M. B. 80 anos de Serviço Social no Brasil: organização política e direção social da profissão no processo de ruptura com o conservadorismo. *Revista Serviço Social & Sociedade*, n. 127, São Paulo: Cortez, 2016, p. 456-476.

AMARAL, G. Revolução e autocracia burguesa no Brasil: seus reflexos na educação após o golpe de 1964. *Revista do Instituto de Políticas Públicas de Marília*, Marília, v. 5, n. 1, p. 91-108, jan./jun. 2019.

BRASIL. Presidência da República. Casa Civil. Subchefia para Assuntos Jurídicos. *Lei nº 8.662 de 7 de junho de 1993*. Dispõe sobre a profissão de assistente social e dá outras providências. Disponível em: [https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/l8662.htm](https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l8662.htm). Acesso em: 20 dez. 2024.

BRAVO, M. I. S.; RAIZER, E. C.; LEMOS, E.; ELPÍDIO, M. H. O protagonismo da ABESS/ABEPSS na virada da formação profissional em Serviço Social. In: SILVA, M. L. O. (Org.). *Congresso da Virada e o Serviço Social hoje: reação conservadora, novas tensões e resistências*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2019. p. 56-82.

CFESS. *Resolução CFESS nº 594/2011*: Altera o Código de Ética do Assistente Social (1993), introduzindo aperfeiçoamentos formais, gramaticais e conceituais em seu texto e garantindo a linguagem de gênero. Brasília: 2011.

CHAUÍ, M. *Brasil: mito fundador e sociedade autoritária*. São Paulo: Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2001.

FERNANDES, F. *A revolução burguesa no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1981.

IANNI, O. *A Ditadura do Grande Capital*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1981.

NETTO, J. P. *Ditadura e Serviço Social: uma análise do Serviço Social brasileiro no Brasil pós-64*. São Paulo: Cortez, 1996.

RAIZER, E. C. A histórica relação do curso de Serviço Social da UFES com a Abepss. In: SERPA, A. P. (Org.). *O curso de Serviço Social da UFES: memória, afetos e história*. Vitória: EDUFES, 2024. p. 101-123.

RAMOS, S. R.; SANTOS, S. M. M. Movimento estudantil de Serviço Social: parceiro na construção coletiva da formação profissional do(a) assistente social brasileiro. In: *Cadernos Abess*. São Paulo: Cortez, 1997. p. 141-165.