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## **PARTICIPATORY INSTITUTIONS AND HYBRID EVIDENCE: DISCUSSION, FERTILE RELATIONS, AND ECOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE<sup>1</sup>**

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### **1 INTRODUCTION**

The literature on evidence-based public policies (EBPPs) traditionally emphasizes the connection (and influence) of scientific evidence on their management cycle. More recently, however, the communication between EBPP and the different epistemological approaches that have emerged in recent decades in the field of public policy analysis has made space for the inclusion of a contextual perspective, so that other logic and knowledge can also be considered evidence (Fischer, 2000; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006; Lejano, 2006; French, 2019; Peres, Boullosa and Bessa, 2021; Pinheiro, 2020a; 2020b). In this area, participatory institutions (PIs) are seen as a locus of knowledge production.

This chapter argues that, on the one hand, PIs promote the inclusion of support based on different forms of knowledge for the management of public policies. On the other hand, we will discuss how such tools are debated, transformed, and re-signified so that *hybrid evidence*, which is the evidence arising from meetings, discussions, deliberations, operational agreements, and conflicts manifested in these spaces, can be generated. It is knowledge that arises from the fruitful relationships established between different actors, who would probably not interact outside the PIs (Abers and Keck, 2008).

The general objective of this chapter lies within this framework, and is to discuss two key questions, namely: i) whether or not PIs produce evidence for

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public policies; and ii) what is the nature (and originality) of the evidence produced within these spaces. The methodology used will be qualitative and will have a predominantly theoretical focus, analyzing – in a complementary way – the literature on EBPP; deliberative democracy; agonistic democracy; and the concept of ecology of knowledge.

This chapter has four more sections in addition to this introduction. Section 2 outlines an overview of the dialog established between the literature on EBPPs and deliberation. Section 3 addresses the potential contribution of PIs and participatory mechanisms to the generation of hybrid evidence using three perspectives: deliberation, agonism, and ecology of knowledge.

It is important to point out that this work does not intend to present each perspective exhaustively, based on sets of authors and dialogs constructed in fields of study with decades of tradition. The approaches have a trajectory formed by dialogs and intersections, and the very definition of the limits and frontiers between them is imprecise and variable. The dialogs established between the authors also contribute to the redefinition or elimination of boundaries and theoretical oppositions.

Thus, this chapter goes beyond emphasizing and discussing the boundaries between the schools of thought, aiming to show how the forms of rationality and interaction between different actors – technical and non-technical – contribute to generating evidence that goes beyond those traditionally advocated by the original literature of EBPPs. To this end, the chapter mainly addresses founding authors in the discussion of each perspective, seeking to identify the root of each and their original contribution to the generation of hybrid evidence.

Section 4 summarizes the argument developed in the previous sections, with special attention to participation and the division of deliberative work. In the systemic approach, there is room for coexistence and articulation between the three schools discussed above, reinforcing the hybrid nature of the potential evidence produced.

Section 5 brings the final considerations and indicates that the hybrid evidence from PIs can be marked by *complementarity*, *transformation*, and *reformulation* of the relationship between different forms of knowledge and epistemologies. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the potential effects that arise from reducing the role of PIs in Brazil, which may interrupt experimentalism around hybrid evidence.

## 2 PARTICIPATION AND EVIDENCE FOR PUBLIC POLICIES: THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND THE EMPIRICAL

Despite the extensive debate surrounding rationality in the specialized literature, for our analysis, we present the interpretation, by Ramos (1989), of the distinction proposed by Weber between the so-called formal/instrumental rationality (*zweckrationalitat*) and subjective or value rationality (*wertrationalitat*), as it helps us clarify the bases of criticism that affect EBPP, as well as the locus of contributions from social participation. We will use the term *subjective rationality* in a synthetic and simplified way to rescue, as suggested by Ramos (1989, p. 3) the ancient meaning of the term reason as the “active force in the human psyche that enables individuals to distinguish between good and evil, between false and true knowledge and, thus, to order his personal and social life”.

In turn, the term *instrumental rationality* will be used to express human conduct guided towards the calculation of utility and consequences, meaning, *determined by an expectation of calculated results or ends* (Ramos, 1989, p. 5). We thus perceive that, while the first understanding carries a normativity about how the social order should be, the second empties itself of ethical elements and focuses on the functional and instrumental aspects surrounding how individuals conduct themselves.

At the core of the EBPPs movement is the search for the best evidence on *what works* to support decision-making in public policy (Davies, Nutley and Smith, 2000). The EBPP discourse, originally formulated in the 1990s in Anglo-Saxon countries, is based on the defense of instrumental rationality, complete and free of subjective interference, and empirical falsifiability as a means of building scientific consensus.

However, not-so-recent critical streams point to the relevance of recognizing the limits and risks of exacerbating a belief in instrumental rationality, as well as the positivist epistemological bases and their methodological procedures. These schools of thought question the emphasis on the search for generalizations and linear causality to the detriment of other attributes considered relevant for the production of public policy, such as contextuality and the diachronic aspect of knowledge construction, as well as the argument legitimacy (Fischer, 2000; Landemore, 2012; Pallett, 2020). Several issues emerge from this dispute, including a challenge to what we should understand by evidence capable of subsidizing public policies. It is in this area that we intend to carry out our discussion, focusing on the literature that seeks to analyze the essence and synthesis of social participation as possible sources of evidence for public policies.

Two initial points deserve to be highlighted before delving into this literature. The first deals with the non-originality of the clash previously mentioned. We can

say that the EBPP movement presents a new way of perceiving the classic debate on the separation between technique and politics in discussions about public policies in a democratic context.<sup>6</sup>

While EBPP revisits the idea that this separation is desirable, post-positivist approaches, such as the one that began with the Argumentative Turn, reject the possibility of this separation and propose to discuss ways to consider values, beliefs, and policies in the analysis of *policymaking* (Fischer, 2000; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006; Lejano, 2006; Spink, 2019; Pinheiro, 2020a; 2020b; Peres, Boullosa and Bessa, 2021). In this way, despite some of these works having been produced even before the term EBPP was coined, the arguments raised by them are worth remembering as they bring relevant subsidies to discuss the role of social participation in the production of evidence, understood in a broader sense, as a form of knowledge that can be used in the production of public policies.

The second point concerns the diversity of concepts for *social participation* given in different analysis contexts of this literature. In some cases, as in that of theorists who emphasize the concept of participatory democracy, participation is brought up as a broader phenomenon, as one of the generating processes of social transformation and democratic construction (Pateman, 1970; 2012; Macpherson, 1978; Barber, 2003). In this line of thought, social participation has an end in itself, regardless of its results in decisions or public policies.

Other theorists, linked to the aforementioned argumentative line of thought, approach social participation from the perspective of deliberative democracy, in which the deliberative character of participation emphasizes the construction of forums where their debates would occur guided by communicative rationality among the set of actors interested in policies, in attempts to reproduce and enhance public spheres (Habermas, 1992; 1997; 2002; Calhoun, 1996; Cohen, 1999). Participation now has an end connected to the collective production of decisions and their social legitimation. The empirical emphasis shifts to the institutional design of forums (ranging from specific instances such as referendums, public hearings, meetings with interest groups, and neighborhood association meetings, to more stable and structured instances such as public policy councils, participatory budgeting, and national conferences).

Considering our objective of identifying the potentialities and limits of participation as a source of evidence for public policies, we are interested in examining the concept in different meanings. Due to the common focus on rationality and the belief that it is necessary to reformulate the dialog between technique and politics, the debate between EBPP and participation has been made, in the specialized

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6. For a more in-depth analysis of this debate, see, for example, Schumpeter (1961), Bobbio (1997), Dahl (2001; 2012), Brennan (2016), and Sandel (2020).

literature, based on a point of view that defines participation from a deliberative perspective. Such a definition interprets social participation as “deliberation on pressing issues that concern the people affected by the decisions in question” (Fischer, 2000, p. 32).

In this context, we can say that it is possible to organize the literature that seeks to analyze and problematize the relationship between deliberation and evidence in four main discussions: i) the type of use that is intended for or effectively given to informational excerpts and knowledge of social participation; ii) the differences between the sources of scientific and deliberative evidence, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each; iii) the factors that determine these differences; and iv) proposals on how to expand the use of knowledge generated by social participation in the process of producing public policies.

Just as in the debate on the relevance of scientific knowledge in the production of public policies, the discussion involving the contribution of knowledge produced by deliberation must be permeated by the question *for what purpose should it be used?* Weiss (1979) draws attention to the importance of recognizing that scientific research is not used in the real world of public policy for the sole purpose of directly supporting decisions. Other purposes are even more frequent, such as the use to clarify new contexts or definitions of public problems, or as *ammunition* to legitimize a previously made decision.

Likewise, works that problematize the use of social participation as a source of evidence point out that it is first necessary to understand the expected objective of social participation to then be able to analyze what types of evidence it can produce to support public policy. This implies that each event or participatory instance can have different intentions, ranging from the exchange of experiences and local knowledge and the translation of technical knowledge into public debate, to measuring public opinion, persuasion, and the construction of legitimacy around previously defined choices (Walters, Aydelotte and Miller, 2000).

It is worth clarifying that Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000) begin their reflection with an idea of participation as a mechanism and instrument of deliberation and not necessarily as a political project of democratic construction. Notwithstanding criticism regarding the desirability of each of these uses, it should be noted that, in practice, these different uses are adopted and condition the results in terms of levels and types of subsidies generated for public policy. Therefore, it is important to be aware that no source of knowledge is used simply to directly support decision-making. Other uses can be given, and it is worthwhile to not only recognize them but investigate them, not discarding them beforehand as means capable of supporting public policy, such as, for example, the use of participation to elucidate contexts unknown to bureaucrats or specialists.

Another analytical perspective of the relationship between participation and the production of evidence highlights the differences between scientific evidence and the knowledge and subsidies produced through social participation. The results of deliberative experiences, which, in general, are researched and analyzed based on qualitative investigative methodologies of specific case studies, are often dismissed or seldom considered because they are evaluated as devoid of rigor or empirical robustness that guarantees replicability or theoretical confirmations. The predominance of positivist and quantitative logic for defining the so-called hierarchy of evidence – meaning the parameters for valuing the types of scientific evidence<sup>7</sup> – relegates deliberation to a secondary level as a source of evidence (Pallett, 2020).

The analysis of the epistemological differences between neo-positivism and post-positivism allows us to identify different contributions that the evidence produced from each of these epistemologies can generate (Fischer, 2000). While the neo-positivist approach seeks generalizations based on a consensus built through the reproduction of empirical tests and statistical confirmation, the post-positivist approach starts with contextualized knowledge and seeks to produce policy analyses through the examination of discursive processes established between different views in the field (Danziger, 1995<sup>8</sup> apud Fischer, 2000; Dryzek, 1993; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006).

Despite the permanent search for scientific objectivity in the positivist and neo-positivist perspective defended by EBPP, its critics demonstrate the limited rationality of agents (Simon, 1956) and argue that knowledge construction processes also carry judgments and choices that are not exclusively technical, but permeated by social values and factors (Fischer, 2000). In this sense, the deliberations, as well as local knowledge, would have the power to bring up different values and views on public issues and problems (Fischer, 2000; Pallett, 2020). By contextualizing the issues and encouraging deliberation, participation would also reveal the political dimension – with its interests, resources, and power games – in which public problems are inexorably inserted (Fischer, 2000).

In this way, several advantages and by-products can be pointed out by promoting meetings and deliberation between citizens, bureaucrats, and specialists. Citizens can be called upon to assess the implications of specialist analyses, allowing the verification of scientific evidence in terms of time constraints and the location in question (Fischer, 2000) or, yet, to reduce biases in the definition of public issues, as it allows a multitude of social concerns to be considered (Parkhurst, 2017).

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7. Although there is no consensus on all levels of this hierarchy, it is possible to say that randomized controlled trials, meta-analyses, and systematic reviews are at the top of the hierarchy of evidence.

8. Danziger, M. Policy analysis post modernized: some political and pedagogical ramifications. *Policy Studies Journal*, v. 23, n. 3, p. 435-450, 1995.

New knowledge can be identified and existing knowledge can be remodeled and legitimized (Fischer, 2000).

Despite the possibilities suggested, the literature on the subject demonstrates that participation can result in a frustrating undertaking that is difficult to generalize. Recent works seek to identify factors that can lead to low participatory effectiveness and ways for better use.

Therefore, questioning the purpose of using participation becomes relevant. Empirical research shows that part of the frustration with the results of participatory processes stems from a misunderstanding of the participants, or a lack of explaining the intended use to them (Walters, Aydelotte and Miller, 2000; Mendonça and Cunha, 2012). Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2000) emphasize the importance of such a definition and of communicating it to those involved before the participatory interaction. They also argue that it is important to consider that different instruments and mechanisms better serve different purposes.

Based on a case study of an open public debate process on environmental conservation and the demarcation of protected lands in Utah, in the United States, in the 1990s, the authors point out, for example, that public consultations and opinion polls conducted served more as a thermometer of public support for the environmental issue than as indicators or parameters for the demarcation of lands to be conserved. In the same sense, Mendonça and Cunha (2012), when analyzing the participatory practices of the Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais State, highlight the importance of connecting the different participatory formats to the objectives of the different phases of public policy, in addition to exploring the articulative potential between different participatory arenas envisioning the construction of deliberative systems.

Walters, Aydelotte and Miller (2020) analyze aspects related to the definition of the use of participation because of the stage in which policy production is found and also adds the issue of the level of conflict between those interested and involved in *policymaking*. The authors argue that the intentions for using participation can be different depending on the stage of public policy. In the initial stages of policy production, such as defining the public problem and identifying criteria, social participation would be useful to highlight different and even competing perspectives that exist in the context of intervention. As for the stages of prospecting, evaluating alternatives, and recommending actions, the possibilities of use to clarify and legitimize positions in the policy definition process would gain more strength. The authors also suggest that public policy problems involving more conflicts demand participation in the initial stages of policy production, whereas, in problems with less conflict, social participation could be introduced in more advanced stages of policy, such as those that identify and recommend alternatives.



Thus, considering the different uses that evidence brought about by social participation can have, as well as the constraints in different contexts of use, the literature that focuses on the subsidies of participation maintains that it is not a substitutive debate, but rather one of integration between the different sources of knowledge. This implies that the challenge would not be to replace scientific evidence with subsidies for social participation but to integrate them, based on recognizing the relevance not only of instrumental rationality but also of the communicative rationality arising from the argumentative process. In this sense, its role is to reveal more about the existing contextual dependence, which, in general, is neglected by the formal argumentative logic of the academy (Fischer, 2000; 2007).

Based on the observation of cases of discursive confrontation between citizens and specialists around environmental issues, Fischer (2000, p. 45, our translation) suggests that “(i)instead of questioning a citizen’s capacity for participation, we should ask how we can interconnect and coordinate the different and simultaneously inherently interdependent discourses of citizens and experts”. Therefore, the question would not revolve around which is the better discourse, but how these different discourses, revealed in the deliberations, can be and are interconnected.

In a converging direction, we can observe the attention of the editors of one of the main journals that address the issue of evidence in public policies – *Policy and Evidence* – when they problematize the hierarchization of different forms of evidence and raise the challenge of facing the difficulties in integrating them (Pearson and Smith, 2018). This is the frontier of the debate about the contribution of other sources of evidence, in addition to scientific evidence, in studies on EBPPs.

Recognizing the diversity of evidence sources is supported by work in different fields. However, little progress has been made toward an integrative proposal. Some nods in this direction would involve considering making room for the development of multi-method analysis capacities and skills, both quantitative and qualitative; and reassessing the parameters and evaluation criteria of the different sources of knowledge (Pallett, 2020). Sustaining, for example, that the subsidies of participatory knowledge be judged and evaluated based on the same parameters of controlled randomized experiments conducted in laboratories, is impossible. Indeed, it can be argued that their attributes and potential contributions to public policy are not distinct but complementary.

The challenge, therefore, is to bring together and build connections between specialized knowledge and public opinion, considering that both technical constraints and public preferences condition the production of public policy. Interacting with citizens has the power to provide specialists with experiences, preferences, and values found in the context of public policy. Ignoring these values implies the loss of important evidence for decision-makers and policymakers and hinders

the social legitimacy of decisions, which is fundamental in a democratic system. The warning raised by Fischer (2000, p. 9) regarding the dangers of exacerbating a technocratic way of decision-making could not be more accurate: “some authors even suggest that the division between the haves and the have-nots will be one of the basic sources of social and political conflict in the new century”.<sup>9</sup>

### 3 THREE PERSPECTIVES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND EVIDENCE

As pointed out in section 2, the literature on EBPPs has encountered difficulties to incorporate the subsidies of participation and deliberation as evidence. This section aims to contribute to this topic by listing four different potential interrelations between the results of participatory mechanisms and initiatives that seek to incorporate the use of evidence in public policies. Each of them deals differently with the relationship between specialized knowledge and participation, here called hybrid forms of evidence that, as mentioned in section 1, would be those arising from meetings, discussions, deliberations, consensuses, and conflicts manifested in the participatory spaces.

Next, we will discuss the relationship between participation and EBPP in detail, from the following perspectives, each addressed in a subsection: *3.1 Rational deliberation and complementarity based on the legitimacy of the best argument*; *3.2 Fruitful relationships and evidence arising from conflict*; and *3.3 The ecology of knowledge*.

As highlighted in the introduction, the split between the schools of thought made here is fundamentally typological, intended to highlight elements that are original to each perspective. Over the decades of theoretical and empirical development in the field, the dialog between authors allows us to constantly redefine boundaries between approaches (Karagiannis and Wagner, 2008; Knops, 2007; Mendonça and Selen, 2015).

#### 3.1 Rational deliberation and complementarity based on the legitimacy of the best argument

The relationship between technique, politics, and evidence from the perspective of deliberative democracy is the most developed and explored by specialized literature. The literature mobilized in section 2 is an example of the recurrent and already

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9. This dilemma invades, for example, the field of political philosophy. Brennan (2016) defends a regime that he calls epistocracy, the domain of people who hold knowledge. He argues that the average American citizen is uneducated and unprepared. Voters' decisions are based on emotion and their choices have little rationality. The author believes that political decisions must be made by specialists. In an opposite proposal, in his discussion of meritocracy, the philosopher Michael Sandel claims that one of the great problems of American politics is that the participation of the working population in the decision-making elite has progressively decreased. This results in an elite that is insensitive to the problems that affect the majority of the population. Income inequality has steadily increased in the United States since the 1970s, and there are few concrete proposals to address this problem (Sandel, 2020).

established dialog between the literature on EBPPs and deliberation. This occurs, among other reasons, due to the foundations of deliberative theory. Main authors of this school, such as Habermas (1992; 1997; 2002), Cohen (1989; 1999), and Calhoun (1996), perceive that the spaces of participation and deliberation consider the development of decisions on a rational foundation based on exchange and collective choice of the best arguments.

The principle of rationality inherent to the deliberative perspective implies not only that interaction between specialists and citizens as a whole is possible, but also desirable. Furthermore, it is advocated that scientists and public policy specialists are possibly sensitive to the knowledge of ordinary citizens and would treat such knowledge as valid within the rational debate. Integrated more recently in the literature of EBPPs, it is here that the defense of *complementarity* between the results of deliberation and scientific evidence is based.

It should be noted, however, that the notion of rationality for deliberativists does not coincide with the idea of instrumental rationality that underlies the EBPP discourse. The deliberativist perspective brings an emancipatory project of the human being in its roots and aims precisely to counteract the imprisonment of private subjectivity generated by the homogenization processes of large-scale industrial society and modernity.<sup>10</sup> To this end, Habermas (1968) defends the notion of a communicative reason capable of safeguarding the ethical autonomy of individuals and stimulating the human capacity for self-reflection.

When examining the concrete experiences of deliberation, however, it is verified that many times they do not follow the conditions foreseen and advocated by the deliberativists. Fischer (2009, p. 11) points out that, while contributions from deliberative democrats “generally recognize the need for expertise, they have also failed to move beyond standard expert understandings, which has hindered citizen participation”. It proposes to develop methodologies that allow a productive meeting between specialists and laypeople, emphasizing the importance of the figure of the *broker*, a mediator who would be responsible for fostering constructive dialog between specialists and non-specialists, acting in the mutual translation between languages and the forms of knowledge, in the search for effective deliberation.

In active deliberative experiences in the United States and some European countries, called Mini publics (Grönlund, Bächtiger and Setälä, 2014; Felicetti, Niemeyer and Curato, 2016), the mediator has a fundamental importance in

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10. As Ramos (1989) highlights in his analysis of Habermas' view of rationality: “in 'the large-scale industrial society, research, science and technology, and industrial utilization merged into one system' (Habermas, 1968, p. 104), thus leading to a repressive form of institutional structure, in that the norms of mutual understanding of individuals are absorbed in a 'behavioral system of rational action with a determined purpose' (op. cit., p. 106). In other words, in such an environment, the difference between substantive and pragmatic rationality becomes irrelevant, even disappearing. Technical-industrial society legitimizes itself through the objective concealment of this difference” (Ramos, 1989, p. 13).

attempts to replicate the perfect public sphere (Ryan and Smith, 2014). Fischer (2000) goes further and points out that the purposes of mediators and promoters of deliberative experiences can be that of the State agents, bureaucrats, and specialists in public policies themselves. This would allow dialog and integration not only between scientific and non-scientific knowledge but also between technical, administrative, and political knowledge held by bureaucrats. In this context, the public servant can be seen as a facilitator of public engagement; as the creator of communities of participation (Fischer, 2009; Fischer and Gottweis, 2013).

Thus, the first form of the relationship between participation and evidence discussed here would be marked by *complementarity* arising from the leveling of scientific, bureaucratic, and common citizen knowledge. From the encounter between these actors and dialogical processes of translation and search for operational agreements, it would be possible to create evidence that incorporates these three forms of knowledge and give way to the technical rigor, the social legitimacy of decisions, and the capacity of their incorporation into public policies, simultaneously.

Although theoretically well-developed, empirical studies on the relationship between experts, bureaucrats, and citizens point to important challenges to complementarity that serve as relevant contributions to the literature on EBPPs. There are recurrent cases of State impermeability to decisions arising from participation and deliberation. The focus of these studies on the institutional design of forums and on the deliberative process itself relegated the issue of incorporating the results of Mini publics into the cycle of public policies, due to the lack of connections with the centers of power (Goodin and Dryzek, 2006; Pateman, 2012; Vieira and Silva, 2013), to a backstage position. The challenge of mediating and translating knowledge has also proved to be quite complex, and forms of scientific knowledge and forms of knowledge related to public management have been used to control debates within participatory experiences. Brazilian empirical literature points to multiple examples in which technicians and bureaucrats control debates and condition the results of deliberative experiences (Wendhausen and Caponi, 2002; Fuks and Perissinotto, 2006; Wendhausen and Cardoso, 2007).

Seeking more elements to advance in the exploration of dynamics for the construction of hybrid evidence, that is, informational resources generated by the integration of knowledge in meetings between bureaucracy, citizens, and the scientific community, we will discuss contributions of the debate on social participation from the perspective of agonistic democracy below.

### 3.2 Fruitful relationships and evidence arising from conflict

Authors such as Mouffe (1999; 2000; 2013) and Purcell (2008) criticize the deliberative concept based on the empirical limitations of deliberative democracy experiences (such as mini publics). They question the notion that political arenas can be based on consensus from the debate between rational arguments not only in the instrumental dimension – as deliberativists do, but also in the subjective dimension. The authors defend an agonist conception of pluralism, emphasizing that the deliberative perspective is depoliticized, and incapable of dealing with the contradictions and conflicts inherent to the public sphere.

Despite the recent developments by both the deliberative and agonistic literature in the sense of reviewing its precepts and bringing the two currents together (Mendonça and Selen, 2015), for this discussion we believe it is relevant to highlight the mistrust of the agonistic perspective regarding the possibility of a harmonic, rational and consensual construction of public policies, based on the dialog between expert bureaucrats and ordinary citizens. The agonist perspective maintains that deliberative forums cannot be isolated and shielded from political contradictions and social inequalities inherent to a broader society and, therefore, there is no way to prevent the deliberative arena from being permeated by power relations, reproducing inequalities.

However, despite these criticisms, social participation is not irrelevant to agonists. Participatory and deliberative forums are important precisely because they allow the expression of inequalities and power relations. By allowing interaction between different ideologies and social groups, participatory spaces can circumscribe conflict and social contradictions within a demarcated space, keeping it from breaking away from the democratic order (although elements of that order may be questioned). Mouffe (2005, p. 31, our translation) understands that

there must be a consensus on the constitutive institutions of democracy and on the “ethical and political” values that support political association – freedom, and equality for all – but there will always be disagreement over what they mean and how they should be implemented. In a pluralist democracy, such disagreements are not only legitimate but necessary.

Thus, this author defends an agonistic confrontation in which the opponents – and not the enemies, as in an antagonistic confrontation – dispute in conditions where power relations can be contested and different alternatives can emerge and be confronted. It is in this sense that participatory spaces can be seen as a locus for agonistic confrontation.

Without intending to generate consensus or eliminate conflicts, participatory spaces can prevent such conflicts from reaching dimensions that go beyond the scope of democracy. In this context, while the spaces built under a deliberative

perspective seek to identify common interests, the participatory spaces seen under an agonist perspective are intended to allow the expression and dispute of different, often conflicting, ideas and views.

These are the terms under which Abers and Keck (2008) perceive the main merits of PIs as promoters of fruitful relationships between different actors. There is an emphasis on *the creative forms that arise in the interaction between profoundly different actors* who probably would not interact if it were not for the existence of spaces for participation and not for the exchange of arguments, seeking to bring the different perspectives to a common and rational instrumental language. The purpose of these spaces would be to allow such interaction. The result of this interaction can allow innovative solutions that would never exist otherwise to emerge (Abers and Keck, 2008).

Such solutions, based on differences and not on the attempt to standardize languages towards consensus, can be considered hybrid evidence, capable of being incorporated into public policies. This is not static evidence, but a type of knowledge that requires technicians to be open and permeable concerning *the common citizen's knowledge*. Many of the shortcomings of deliberative democratic experiences occur because technicians and those who hold power do not value and are not open to different experiences.

From the debate raised so far, we support a concept of hybrid evidence that does not focus on the direct result of the participatory mechanism, but that envisions the *transformation of the multiple actors* that participate therein in a perspective of democratic strengthening. These actors are who can modify how we create and implement public policies. Participation mechanisms can therefore contribute to the creation of new identities that dissolve the boundaries between citizens, the State, and academia (Koga, 2016).

The agonistic perspective understands that alternatives are generated from the existence of different contingent political identities, which carry competing demands and projects that can also conflict. Collective identities, in turn, are constituted by a process of continuous discrimination between *us* and *them*. This means that opposition is a constitutive element in the formation of collective identities and, therefore, in the real emergence of alternatives and choices (Mouffe, 2010). In this sense, agonistic participatory spaces would be common symbolic spaces in which conflict can be expressed and identities, public problems, and alternatives, can emerge.

The daily political action of these *transformed* actors, both outside and within the participatory arena itself, is what will allow the incorporation of hybrid evidence in public policies. The action of bureaucrats, fundamental actors in this perspective, can, in the long term, strengthen the analytical capacity of the State, which becomes more permeable to new sources of knowledge and evidence (Hsu, 2015).

In subsection 3.3, we will also incorporate the contributions of the debate involving the ecology of knowledge into the formulation of the concept of hybrid evidence.

### 3.3 The ecology of knowledge

The postcolonial perspective, undertaken by Boaventura Santos (2007) when defending an ecology of knowledge, adds to the debate in this chapter by explicitly questioning the very nature of knowledge and speaking of the perverse effects generated by the predominance of Western scientific knowledge as an archetypal form of impartial and universal knowledge.

According to the author, the last centuries have been marked by the legitimization of Western science as a unique and superior form of knowledge. Science now holds a monopoly on the universal distinction between true and false, to the detriment of alternative forms of knowledge, such as philosophy and theology. As Quijano (2007) adds, the instrumentalization of reason by the power of the colonizers not only expropriated the colonized peoples of their knowledge but also repressed the modes through which they produced knowledge, resulting in distorted knowledge paradigms. Stating that science is the only valid form of knowledge holds a connection to the historical and contextual process surrounding the affirmation of this form of knowledge.

Western modernity was built from the division of the world that Santos (2007) calls the affirmation of abyssal thinking: it is a division between a dominant model of civilization, which is now considered legitimate, and other models, historically considered primitive or inferior. Such a division would have justified colonial domination, based on a positivist and evolutionist premise. Western civilization and its knowledge base, modern science, would be the dominant form. The other forms of civilization – as their respective cosmologies and alternative forms of knowledge – were considered subaltern and, sometimes, decimated in what the author called an *epistemic genocide*.

Non-scientific knowledge came to be considered invalid and mischaracterized as forms of knowledge. Indigenous, peasant, popular, and lay knowledge were now seen as false. These forms of knowledge came to be denied the very definition of *knowledge*. They would, therefore, be considered simply as beliefs, opinions, and intuitive understandings in general. The legitimization of colonial thought made it possible to draw a line that

separates philosophy and theology on the one hand, and, on the other, knowledge made incommensurable and incomprehensible for not obeying either the scientific criteria of truth or the criteria of knowledge recognized as an alternative, to philosophy and theology (Santos, 2007, p. 73).

However, it is increasingly visible that science has strong limitations as a primary source of evidence for public policy. Contemporary literature points to difficulties in directly incorporating scientific evidence into public policies since its preparation process follows different rules, often incompatible with the rites considered scientific. In opposition, the very ontological nature of science as universal knowledge is called into question due to its limitations in influencing some areas of public policy. Even in areas with a high scientific weight, such as environmental policies, some solutions suggested by science seem to have a less practical effect than other forms of knowledge – such as indigenous knowledge – in reducing environmental impacts.

It is necessary to emphasize that the scientific field itself is an arena of struggles between several different concepts. In this field, dominant and dominated positions confront each other (Bourdieu, 1983). In the human and social sciences, including public policies, different paradigms coexist and the introduction of a new paradigm does not necessarily supervene that of the previous paradigm, as would be expected in the exact sciences (Kuhn, 2005). In economics, for example, different theories advocate using different public policies to solve concrete problems. The adopted economic policy is a result of the concrete struggles for the scientific legitimacy of that time. Consequently, methods must be constantly renewed. These procedures must be further refined when social scientists use public policies to propose interventions in reality.

The resolution of such a dilemma, according to Santos (2007, p. 83), requires an “alternative thought of alternatives”, meaning an “ecology of knowledge”. Such ecology stands for an understanding of the real world that exceeds the Western understanding. The monoculture of modern science is confronted by the plurality of heterogeneous knowledge. Scientists must exercise constant epistemological vigilance and put previously constructed notions to the test, that is, the conceptions of what they consider correct (Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron, 1975).

The recognition of new forms of knowledge does not discard science but puts it on the same level as other forms, based on sustainable, dynamic, and autonomous interactions between them. The ecology of knowledge emphasizes not only the product that will be the basis of evidence but above all, the process of building knowledge that must be, by nature, interknowledge. Therefore, this implies presuming that other types of knowledge are irrational and recognizing other types of rationality as possible means of achieving knowledge.

Although the materialization of the ecology of knowledge requires a broad societal transformation, some of its principles can be developed in participatory spaces, generating hybrid forms of knowledge. The presence, in some participatory mechanisms, of actors from traditional communities, and popular movements,



among others, allows the incorporation of new epistemologies into the political process. Within participatory spaces, such forms of knowledge can interact with elements from other epistemologies, such as modern science, generating innovative evidence for the construction of public policies.

We recognize the proposals made by the ecology of knowledge are difficult to implement in most of the current interaction contexts between the State and society and that its promotion is still residual. However, for the formulation of the concept of hybrid evidence sustained in this chapter, we understand that this perspective contributed significantly by arguing that, for the PIs to be able to promote the ecology of knowledge, it is necessary to resume basic aspirations of participatory democracy, such as an emphasis on participation as an educational process and the search for a broad social transformation, which reaches the very source of knowledge on which society is based (Barber, 2003; Macpherson, 1978; Pateman, 1970). We also note that, depending on the profile and objective of the participatory space, an opening toward the ecology of knowledge may be the only way to incorporate the knowledge of the broad set of actors involved in the public policy management cycle.

#### **4 SUMMARY: HYBRID EVIDENCE AND DIVISION OF DELIBERATIVE WORK**

The relationship between participation and evidence implies considering forms of hybrid evidence that go beyond technical, scientific, or bureaucratic knowledge. To this end, non-technical and non-scientific forms of knowledge need to be considered as being on the same level as the classic forms valued by the literature on EBPPs. It is important to emphasize that it is not a question of discarding forms of knowledge based on formal western rationality, but of recognizing the existence and respecting other forms of knowledge, integrating them with a view to inter-knowledge.

Evidence from participatory spaces is not mutually exclusive. Although this chapter has used – for didactic purposes – a division between three different perspectives around the hybrid evidence, in empirical reality such schools of thought present several overlapping points. The development of the deliberative, agonistic, and ecology of knowledge fields is decades-long, and such boundaries are fluid. The debate between authors – and the empirical imperatives – has led to increasingly complex theoretical formulations, which combine characteristics from each of the three perspectives.

One of these formulations advocates establishing deliberative systems (Mansbridge, 1999; Mansbridge et al., 2010). Although the very definition of systems refers to the deliberative aspect, “systemic” theorists are open to the expression of feelings and values, they recognize the inevitability (and usefulness) of conflicts, the potential of fruitful relationships, and even of other forms of rationality other than

the western one. Such authors review the very concept of reason, incorporating and discussing agonist elements.

As Fonseca (2019) points out, *systemic* authors update the deliberative perspective – incorporating elements from other schools of thought – based on the perception of the impossibility of forming a public sphere based on exclusively rational arguments and in which all social actors have the material and cognitive conditions to participate freely and equally.

Agonistic elements – such as the possibilities of bargaining, voting, and negotiating, in addition to the inevitability of the manifestation of power relations and values such as self-interest –, previously considered pernicious for deliberative practices, are revitalized and considered legitimate acts within participation forums (Mansbridge, 1999; Mansbridge et al., 2010). That considered, *systemic* authors reformulate the deliberative perspective based on the inclusion of conflicting and pluralistic elements, without such reformulation annihilating the search for a public sphere capable of producing equality and generating public deliberations (Bächtiger et al., 2010).

Within the scope of deliberative systems, the concepts of participatory space ecology and deliberative moment sequencing are relevant to translating hybrid evidence from theory to practice.

Thinking about evidence from the perspective of the ecology of participatory spaces implies recognizing that PIs are not uniform. In Brazil, for example, the old National Social Participation System (or Sistema Nacional de Participação Social, in Portuguese)<sup>11</sup> considered a series of mechanisms, such as public policy councils; public policy commissions; national conferences; public ombudsmen; dialog tables; inter-council forums; public hearings; public consultations; and virtual environments for social participation as instances of participation.

Such mechanisms are very different from each other, each having its objectives, compositions, institutional designs, and particular ways of acting. As a result, depending on the specificities of each participation mechanism, it may mobilize one or more forms among the hybrid evidence discussed throughout this chapter.

In some instances of participation, expressing conflicts may be the prevalent goal; in others, the political inclusion of marginalized groups is the main result of the mechanism (Alencar et al., 2013). There are cases in which the role of technical and scientific knowledge is so intrinsic to the participatory institution itself that such instances are better defined as technical-political (Fonseca, Bursztyrn and Moura, 2012).

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11. Decree No. 8.243, of May 23, 2014, revoked by Decree No. 9.759, of April 11, 2019.

Also relevant to understanding the multiplicity of ways to incorporate hybrid evidence into public policy are the concepts of division of deliberative labor (Mansbridge et al., 2012) and deliberation sequencing (Goodin, 2005).

The division of deliberative labor points out that, if the existence of instances of interaction between specialists and non-specialists is recommended, processes in which expertise and technical complexity should guide decision-making are also necessary, without necessarily relying on the active participation of ordinary citizens.

The sequencing of deliberative moments provides palpability to the proposal of deliberative work division, by seeking to define connections – temporal and transvalued – between moments of debate and decision-making. Therefore, “sequenced and multilevel processes can contemplate the participation and influence of both specialists and ordinary citizens and activists interested in the subject, in a multiplicity of channels and respecting the different forms of knowledge” (Fonseca, 2019, p. 99).

Both concepts are fundamental to dealing with the *technicians’ dilemma*, based on the recognition that PI results are functionally differentiated and temporally distributed, respecting the spaces of action, the roles, and the logic of each group of actors (Moore, 2016).

In summary, it is necessary both to recognize and act in different and differentiated PIs and to predict multiple moments and scales of action within them. Only then will it be possible to incorporate hybrid evidence into the literature and empirical practices of constructing EBPPs.

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter, we debate the possible contributions of social participation as a source of evidence for the production of public policies. By analyzing the literature that discusses the precepts of the EBPP movement and any criticism surrounding it, we show that the theme is still little explored in these works and, when it is, social participation is considered within a point of view limited to some aspects of the deliberative perspective.

Bearing in mind the polysemic character of the term *social participation*, we sought to analyze the main theoretical approaches that conceptualize it, considering aspects that are of interest to the debate of evidence for public policies. Three approaches were highlighted in this chapter: deliberative democracy, agonistic democracy, and the ecology of knowledge. They present different ways of understanding or conceiving: i) the nature of knowledge; ii) the purpose of the participatory process; iii) the forms of interaction between the actors involved; and iv) the characteristics of the evidence produced by participation.

Despite their differences, we argue that the three approaches offer contributions to the reasoning of social participation as a potential generator of what we call *hybrid evidence*, meaning evidence originating from the encounter between different actors and groups, whether through debates, deliberations, operable agreements or even conflicts manifested within participatory spaces.

In the deliberative perspective, social participation would be understood as a means of organizing the arrival of different substrates of rationality in the decision-making process. The search for operational agreements of this approach would place the participatory phenomenon as a means of achieving *complementarity* between scientific, bureaucratic, and common citizen knowledge through dialogic processes.

The agonistic approach, in turn, assumes that conflict is non-eliminable and inherent in social relations and, therefore, in the political sphere. The agonistic perspective maintains that the non-recognition of the conflict threatens democracy since it excludes minority and dissenting positions and identities that, when not recognized in the political sphere, end up finding an outlet in other spheres of life, such as the religious or private sphere. Within this understanding, the agonistic approach sees participatory spaces as a potential locus of democratic manifestation in the pluralist sense, that is, guaranteeing expression, recognition, and confrontation between different or even opposing positions and interpretations that exist in society.

In this sense, the main contribution of participation would be less in the method of reaching common decisions, but in the excerpts generated by the participatory process. The production of fruitful relationships between actors who would never meet outside these spaces, as well as the possibility of collective identities, public problems, and creative solutions emerging and being recognized from these interactions would be examples, from the agonistic perspective, of contributions of participation to the hybrid evidence production process for public policies. We begin to partially see contributions at a level of *transformation*, not just complementarity.

Continuing this transformative perspective, the approach of the ecology of knowledge adds to the debate by explicitly questioning the hegemony of Western scientific knowledge as the only source for understanding the world and, therefore, public problems. As a result of the dominant civilization model, knowledge originating from Indigenous, peasant, and popular knowledge, for example, is ignored or interpreted in advance as false, since it does not follow the criteria of western scientific production.

Based on this critical view of the nature of knowledge, the ecology of knowledge makes it possible to broaden the understanding of participatory spaces as potential generators of hybrid evidence not only within the spectrum of Western formal knowledge but also among knowledge that departs from different

epistemologies, at a level of *reformulation*. This is not about ignoring science, but making use of participatory mechanisms to enable interactions between different forms of knowledge in a perennial, dynamic and sustainable way. In the approach, emphasis is placed on the international potential of participation as a knowledge construction process instead of a tool for choosing the best available evidence, directly confronting the precepts of the EBPP approach.

In short, we highlight three main contributions of the literature presented above to the debate involving EBPP. First, the initial literary contribution attempts to bring politics and democratic aspirations to the center of public policy. Whether aiming at the emancipation of human beings or democratic radicalization, participatory currents highlight the importance of having plural worldviews and the pedagogical effects of interaction in the process of social organization. Second, in this same sense, this literature recognizes and gives rise to conflict, as an inherent and even desirable element in encounters with others that, in addition to allowing one to recognize what is different, has the power to generate new knowledge and collective identities.

Finally, and third, we sustain that participation literature has contributed to critiquing EBPP, as it makes clear the centrality of the instrumental dimension in the vision of rationality that the latter defends to the detriment of the subjective dimension that participation seeks to rescue. In other words, in addition to calculating the best means for the desired immediate results, the participation literature collaborates in rescuing normative aspects of human rationality, making different positions on issues such as which society we want to live in and the means we consider correct for reaching it, explicit, debatable, and contestable.

Despite the relevant theoretical-analytical constructions of the three schools presented, it must be recognized that considerable empirical research must be performed regarding the effective use of the potentialities of social participation for the construction of hybrid evidence. The fact that challenges for implementing a vision of the ecology of knowledge are certain, with considerable magnitude, and demand expanded processes of social transformations that are still incipient. To be more specific, these processes would be the dispute involving the recognition of the relevance of other sources of knowledge other than those produced by Western science.

In any case, we maintain that the lessons learned from the literature on social participation reveal a vast and fruitful way to advance in the debate, not only about what can be considered as evidence to inform and support public policies but also to envision and problematize means of integration from different sources of knowledge, as the literature on EBPPs has already recognized. The proposal to deepen and empirically explore the construction processes and uses of hybrid evidence,

as well as to dialog with the literature that deals with the limits, specificities, and improvement of participatory instances, strongly points in this direction.

There is room here for a critical comment about the current possibilities for Brazilian PIs to continue experimentation around hybrid evidence. As of 2014, an explicit and deliberate movement towards the devaluation of PIs took shape in the national political scenario.

The first act was the reaction to Decree No. 8.243, of May 23, 2014 (Brasil, 2014), which established the National Social Participation Policy (PNPS, or *Política Nacional de Participação Social* in Portuguese) and the National Social Participation System (SNPS, or *Sistema Nacional de Participação Social* in Portuguese). Legislative Decree Project (PDL, or *Projeto de Decreto Legislativo* in Portuguese) No. 1.491/2014 discussed the suspension of the effects of the presidential decree, claiming that there was a “transfer of the institutional debate to segments eventually co-opted by the government itself”, with the risk of “restricting this participation to that social segment chosen per the desire of the palace”.<sup>12</sup>

These arguments, which do not withstand a more careful analysis (Avelino, Ribeiro and Machado, 2018), were accepted by the House of Representatives when approving the PDL, whose proceedings in the Federal Senate were halted.

The second act began during the Michel Temer government, when he issued Provisional Presidential Decree No. 744, on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, eliminating the Board of Trustees of Empresa Brasil de Comunicação (EBC). The explanatory memorandum sent to the National Congress justifies that the collegiate’s extinction “results from the need to speed up decisions within the scope of the EBC, in compliance with the principle of efficiency” (Oliveira and Padilha, 2016). The risks behind this trend have also been analyzed (Avelino, Alencar and Costa, 2017).

Finally, in the government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, the argument of efficiency joins that of economy to justify various restrictive measures that focused on how participative spaces work, such as Decree No. 9.759 of April 11, 2019, which “extinguishes and establishes guidelines, rules, and limitations for federal public administration collegiate bodies” (Brasil, 2019). When the constitutionality of this act was questioned before the Federal Supreme Court, the Attorney General’s Office used these arguments to defend the presidential act, “to the extent that (sic) it implements a better rationalization of the use of public resources, structure and manpower by reducing the exorbitant number of collegiate bodies that, in practice, burdened the public machine and hindered the scope of its optimal operation” (AGU, 2019, p. 4). The effect of these measures on spaces of participation and the

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12. Available at: <https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=617737>.

phenomenon of concentrating power on the government agenda have also been discussed (Avelino, Fonseca and Pompeu, 2020).

Analyzing this path, it is possible to perceive that the movement against social participation is initiated with openly partisan political arguments to, over time, incorporate a more technical and sophisticated discourse, which uses arguments of efficiency and economy to justify the decisions of public administration. With the attacks on social participation, it is important to try to identify, in addition to the announced democratic setback, what is also lost in terms of providing evidence for public policies.

The perception is that political restriction also hides an epistemic restriction, in an opposite position to the hybrid evidence discussed throughout this chapter. The first act would, therefore, exclude all manifestations and knowledge coming from social groups that did not necessarily support the current government. Furthermore, as was evident from the second act onwards, silencing opposing groups was insufficient: it was necessary to end *inefficient* dialogs, thus considered as any form of questioning directed towards the public administration that would hinder the “scope of its optimal operation” (AGU, 2019, p. 4). This speech, based on instrumental rationality, showed that there was a project to be completed by the public administration and any divergent evidence, whether political opposition, simple disagreement, or alternative forms of knowledge, would no longer be tolerated. In a public management model that does not admit proof to the contrary, hybrid and plural spaces are not just undesirable, they are considered extremely dangerous.

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