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On dealing with knowledge in participatory processes of decision making

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This thesis is done in memory of Sergio Vega, who left much in many of us.

Abstract

This text tries to explore the issue of knowledge in relation to ‘participatory processes of decision making’. Writing from an interdisciplinary perspective, the text revises both theories on democracy and on knowledge trying to bridge them in order to highlight the importance of the knowledge dimension for understanding the ‘participatory processes of decision making’(PPDM). The text suggests 3 aspects on which knowledge can be of use for understanding the PPDM: the learning dimension, the discourses, and the inclusion/exclusion process. The text initially reviews some of the main theories on democracy that have suggested a greater involvement of the citizens in the decisions in the community and how knowledge has already been present on some of this literature. Later on, the argument on the relevance of knowledge in PPDM is built by bringing forward theories on knowledge belonging to diverse disciplines, among others, constructivist’s (J. Piaget and H. Glasserfeld) and M. Foucault’s perspectives on knowledge. The centrality of the 3 aspects proposed (the learning dimension, discourses and inclusion/exclusion process) is brought into discussion by a dialogue between the revised theories on knowledge and democracy. Finally the theoretical discussion is exemplified by presenting briefly a case of PPDM, the Participatory Budgeting in Dondo, Mozambique. The example shows how these three perspectives may be useful not only from an epistemic perspective, but how they may have a more pragmatic use as well. The text concludes that the knowledge dimension can help disclosing diverse central features of the PPDM, contributing for interpreting the complexity on which the participatory processes of decision making are immersed.

Keywords: knowledge, politics, decision making, participatory democracy, participatory budgeting

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Abbreviations:

PPDM – Participatory Processes of Decision Making

PB – Participatory Budgeting

*“The world that everyone sees is not the world
but a world which we bring forth with others”*

Maturana and Varela¹

Introduction

The changes in the communication systems worldwide creates a greater availability of information, making more obvious the interconnections and complexity of the decisions which the governments have to face. The decisions of the governments depend importantly on how the matters in question are shaped in discourse, in other words, what aspects are pondered and in which form they are considered. This pondering is necessarily selective as the governments cannot deal with all the variables involved at all times, it requires synthesis as well as selection and dismissal of aspects. What variables are selected and the form they are selected depend to a great extent on who is participating in the decision making process. In a democratic ideal every citizen should be able to participate to a certain degree in the decisions, contributing to shape the way in which the problems of the community are approached.

Democracy has established for most of the nation-states as the norm and ideal for the decision making processes. The most common form of democracy, representative democracy, display diverse problems and different societies show a growing dissatisfaction with it (Dalton et al. 2001: 143f). At the same time, it is possible to see an increasing demand for more direct participation of the lay citizens; opening greater possibilities for the establishment of decision settings for deliberation and direct involvement of the general population (Norris, 1999). Nonetheless, actual examples of participatory settings of decision making remain scarce and scattered, and there is still a sizable skepticism of both citizens and politicians about their implementation and of the benefits that these settings could bring.

In mainstream politics “participation” is a ‘buzz’ word and it is an element present in a variety of policies. However it would seem that in various occasions this approach to participation does not have always positive consequences (Cooke & Kothari, 2001: 14); contributing for leaving sometimes unquestioned the fundamental structure of the government, and the alternatives for building a setting in which the citizens truly decide their conditions of existence in a self-sustaining manner.

¹ Maturana and Varela, 1987: 245

We are therefore in need of models that move forward the reflection on participatory processes to allow us to think of settings on which the citizens, in our diversity of standpoints, can build a common world. In this sense it is necessary to re-think the participatory processes to appraise the complexity on which they are immersed. Therefore it may become necessary to create models on which we interpret the participatory processes in more comprehensive manners for building more desirable forms of decision and coexistence.

The present text enters in this reflection about the participatory processes, trying to contribute to the issue of appraising the ‘participatory processes of decision making’². This is done with the objective of having a better understanding of the processes that could derive in the formulation of more solid alternatives. Hence, this text suggests the revision of the ‘knowledge’ dimension in the ‘participatory processes of decision making’ (PPDM) as a way to account for certain central processes happening in the participatory processes, namely: the learning dimension, the discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process.

The relations between knowledge and democratic decisions are multiple; throughout the text some of these relations will be explored. The knowledge dimension can be central to think about the political processes of decision making. Furthermore, the tie between knowledge and political decisions can be seen as mutually constitutive. The political decisions contribute to shape the way we live and how the world is appresented after us, thereafter the conditions on which we ‘know’ the world. And at the same time, that what we know, our knowledge about the world and its relations, is the base on which political decisions are to be made.

Chapter 1.

Situating the study

1.1 About the research

This paper stands between theory on knowledge, theory on participatory democracy and actual participatory process of decision making. It seeks to explore from an interdisciplinary framework how we can interpret in a better way the participatory processes of decision making in order to understand their complexity, thus to be able to assess them. Hence this text suggests that ‘knowledge’ as a body of thought and reflection can contribute for interpreting the participatory processes in a better way.

² What is referred by participatory processes of decision making is explained in in section 1.2. (page 4).

Then, the central research question of this text is:

How can the knowledge dimension enhance our understanding of the Participatory Processes of Decision Making (PPDM)?

As it can be expected the answer to this question cannot be a definitive or all enhancing. Nevertheless, this paper will try to suggest three aspects on which the knowledge dimension contributes for interpreting the PPDM: the learning aspect, the discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process.

This paper has also 3 sub-questions that contribute for addressing the main one and organize the structure of the paper. The questions are the following:

1. What theoretical approaches to knowledge may be useful for interpreting the PPDM?

For answering this question the text will explore selected theories on knowledge that can contribute for understanding certain processes in the PPDM. The theories revised in the text have been to a certain degree foreign for many studies of PPDM.

2. What aspects of the PPDM can the knowledge dimension³ help us understand?

The second sub-question will serve to explain the mentioned aspects that this text tries to explore: the learning dimension, the discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process. The relevance of these aspects is presented through a dialogue between the theory on knowledge and the theory on more participatory forms of democracy.

3. How does the 'knowledge dimension' contribute to address and interpret an actual PPDM case?

Finally, this question will be addressed by presenting an actual PPDM case, with the objective of exemplifying the possible use of those suggested aspects which the knowledge dimension may help understanding. The example used is the Participatory Budgeting example in Dondo, Mozambique. This pioneering case in Africa, shows a great array of processes happening simultaneously inside it, being helpful to exemplify alternatives of study and the relevance of the three aspects on which the paper focuses.

³ The expression 'knowledge dimension' refers to the idea of knowledge and the different levels of meaning that can be associated to it.

This paper, expects to contribute mostly at an epistemological level, in order to think of how we think of the PPDM. It mixes different theoretical stands and an empirical case that may contribute for the range of interpretations of PPDM.

1.2 The meaning of ‘participatory processes of decision making’

Before describing the structure of the paper I would like to clarify briefly to what I make reference when I use the expression ‘participatory processes of decision making’ (PPDM). This expression is used to make reference to the decision making processes made at the ruling social level, or government, in which a large number of citizens⁴ participate and deliberate about the decisions for defining the public matters. By using this term I do not intend to frame this approach as necessarily something different to what is understood inside direct democracy, or participatory democracy; it makes reference to the specific part of the decision making process done by direct participation of the citizens. It doesn’t point towards some normative definition of what participatory decision-making should be or what could qualify as one. Nevertheless, some well known examples could include: the Panchayat in Kerala, India, the Landsgemeinde in Switzerland or the Participatory Budgeting in Brazil.

1.3 Structure of the paper

The content and the writing styles between the chapters change considerably as they treat with different facets of the topic. The first three chapters of the paper are mostly a revision of theories, while the rest of the chapters present analytical and interpretative work. Above all the paper remains theoretical, from the exception of the Participatory Budgeting example in Dondo.

The paper is organized in the order of the research sub-questions. Which are addressed after the third chapter. Before that, in the present chapter, is presented the methodology and metatheoretical considerations of the text. Followed by a theory chapter (2nd) on which we enter the discussion on democracy and participation. In that chapter some of the major lines of thought in relation to more participatory

⁴ By citizens I make reference more specifically to the population in a certain territory, instead than to the legal status at certain nation-state or its sub-divisions. To some degree similar to Will Kimlicka’s (1995) minority inclusive citizenship.

forms of democracy are presented; introducing to the discussion between democracy, PPDM and knowledge.

In the third chapter, the first sub-question is addressed, presenting theoretical perspectives on knowledge. The definition of knowledge is reviewed, and some theoretical perspectives on knowledge are explored, among other constructivist perspectives of Glasserfeld(1990) and Piaget(1977) and Foucault's stands on power/knowledge(1980). The paper suggests that these theories may contribute for apprising central aspects of the participatory processes of decision making.

The fourth chapter, addresses the second sub-question, by reflecting on the aspects that knowledge may help to understand in participatory processes of decision making. The mentioned aspects are explored (learning dimension, discourses and inclusion/exclusion) as a mode of dialogue of theories and setting the base for its more pragmatic use.

Finally the fifth chapter presents the example of the Participatory Budgeting of Dondo as a mode of exemplifying the argument of the paper. The third sub-question is attended, presenting an alternative for addressing and interpreting some features of the PPDM. The example serves to reflect upon some of the theories reviewed along the paper.

1.4 Methodological Remarks

As we have seen, this text is overall theoretical and it is complemented with a brief example of a field study in Dondo, Mozambique (the example presents its own methodology). Therefore the type of research done is mainly as 'deskwork', seen mostly as literature review and analytic activities, complemented with the mentioned field study or 'fieldwork' (the description of the methods used on the 'fieldwork' can be found in the chapter 5).

The text is considered to be done fundamentally as an 'interpretive research'. Some have suggested that in social sciences there has been an 'interpretative turn' (among the many 'turns') mostly visible between 1970 and 1990 (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012: 5). However, The interpretive methods along with other qualitative methods are still challenged in some scientific fields of lack of rigor, even if in them there is great array of continuously improving methods (Ibid: 130). The interpretive approach is considered adequate for this text due certain epistemological and ontological assumptions behind it; among others, the view that our knowledge is situated in language, territory, history, culture, context, and the like. A perspective present in Heidegger's 'Being and Time' (1927), that has been highly influential for diverse disciplines, and also central in some views associated to postmodernism and poststructuralism.

Hermeneutics as a philosophical approach centered in interpretation and understanding, brings about central elements of the interpretive method. Hermeneutics, has had a long history, however in the recent developments in the 20th century, essentially with M. Heidegger and followed by H.G. Gadamer, hermeneutics turned from being a philosophical study of the interpretation and the possibility of symbolic communication mostly through texts, towards being seen in a broader linguistic perspective, seen as a central feature in our existence: “interpretation makes things, objects, the fabric of the world, appear as something”⁵ (Ramberg and Gjesdal, 2005).

Hermeneutics provides valuable elements for our methodological approach. The present study is situated inside human sciences, and as the social is highly dependent on the historical moment of our study, then it can be seen that this study “is motivated in a special way by the present and the interests...[as]an object [of study] does not exist at all in itself” (Gadamer, 1976: 253 in Outhwaite, 1987: 66).

Hermeneutics in Gadamer’s view suggested that the interpretative process was a dialogical process between our ‘horizon’ of interpretation,- what is opened by our situated position (linguistic, culture, history, place...) -, and the ‘horizon’ of the object of study (1976).

As I mentioned above, the study consists of a ‘deskwork’ study and a ‘fieldwork’ study; in this sense the two of them are to pass through an interpretive process. However in the ‘deskwork’ process I have to deal with the interpretation of texts. Hermeneutics has provided extensive insights about this process. Interpretation, for hermeneutics, shouldn’t mean to find the ultimate meaning that the author intended in her text, but what the text in its full content can communicate about the phenomena opened by the text and what the situated interpreter brings about (Ricoeur, 1975: 93f). The text then exists, somehow by itself as a whole, allowing new interpretations, as in Gadamer’s analogy: “just as the word ‘text’ really means an inter-wovenness of threads that does not ever again allow the individual threads to emerge” (Gadamer, 1980: 6). Thereafter there can always be an emergence of meaning through the interpretation of the text, “the meaning of the text has become autonomous in relation to the intention of the author” (Ricoeur, 1975: 90). However this is not an invitation towards avoiding deepening upon the language or situation of the author, and what could she has tried to communicate, on the contrary these can also be crucial practices for the interpretive process. But what this view of hermeneutics tries to suggest is that “interpretation is an open process that no single vision closes” (Ricoeur, 1975: 91).

⁵ Ramberg and Gjesdal use that phrase describing Heidegger’s perspective on hermeneutics and the ‘ontological turn’.

As Andrew Sayer (2000) has suggested, a very difficult question to answer for our research process, is: what counts as a good interpretation? In Sayer's view we shouldn't aim to give authoritative interpretations or such, but to contribute into the range of interpretations, adding towards a 'creative conversation' (2000: 46). I concur on this position. Considering that the constant creation of meaning of the interpretive process can contribute towards more functional or desirable interpretations of our social system.

Habermas views on hermeneutics (1988) have suggested a critical approach on which we criticize and revise the linguistic elements by which interpretation happens, as through language are also maintained undesirable situations of power and domination; a perspective relevant to account for in our writings.

In my text the interpretative-hermeneutic approach plays a crucial role since I attempt to bring forward elements of dissociated theories, and to try to interpret them in relation to the constellation of issues on sight and the research problem we are trying to address. Therefore the elements that arise from the interpretation are only one possibility among several. Hence, the importance of a larger and more detailed theoretical part in the present text on which I clarify the elements on which I make my interpretations in the matter, and from which the reader can draw her own conclusions.

1.5 Metatheoretical considerations

It becomes relevant to make clear some premises under which this text is written due the structure which might look foreign to some readers. Although this text would probably fit best as a political theory study in the context of development studies, certain elements in it could make it hard to attach strictly to a specific field or sub-field. The text is intended to be written in an interdisciplinary manner, as defined by Martin-Barbero, with the possible use of the information of diverse disciplines, as well with their epistemic and methodological frameworks (2003: 14). As well to be written in an interdisciplinary fashion as defined by Max-Neef (2005: 7), with coordination over a central or higher theme, in which this case is a political matter. This relatively-kept respect for the disciplines (or disrespect for some) is done under the consideration of the communicative purpose of the text, maintaining certain common framework of notions and due the advantages it might have for the interpretation of it; and secondly it is done for preserving what Pierre Bourdieu has called 'cultural capital' (e.g. 1984; 1991), in a scientific field still importantly shaped by disciplinary boundaries. However, writing interdisciplinary carries many difficulties, for instance depth in a specific field might be risked and there is an extra effort of translation. This situation also highlights the importance, while writing interdisciplinarily, of what Anthony Guiddens (1984) has used as 'double

hermeneutic' in which the enquirer, situated as another actor, has to deal with meaning and interpretative categories of others, having to translate, "introducing frames of meaning associated with certain contexts of social life to those in others" (Guiddens, 1984: 285).

One purpose of this text is to attempt to *integrate*; to attempt to bring together views from different fields. This arises from the observed need of bridging knowledge that has been traditionally parceled, attempting to find solutions to the pressing problems that our world faces, a view I consider increasingly common inside the scientific community. The aim of integrating is done by following the premise of the emergence of new meanings and interpretation when integrated at the level of the individual. And it is done against the belief that the knowledge created in strict disciplinary boundaries will indisputably eventually be integrated into all other related phenomena by some hypothetical person. Nonetheless here is not disregarded the importance of deep specialization, hence it is only emphasized the need of the complementary (and sometimes disregarded) integrative effort on which this paper tries to center.

Another aspect of crucial importance that I consider affects importantly the research is our ontological assumptions for the research. It would be impossible to explore these in more detail due space constraints, however, I consider simple, useful and summarizing for the purpose of this text the 'systems perspective' as in Fritjof Capra's interpretation (1999). This systems approach or 'paradigm' considers that "all phenomena are interconnected therefore to explain a certain phenomena we need to understand all the others, what results impossible" (Capra, 1999: 60, liberal translation). If we accept this view, our scientific enquiry will always have to be limited as it cannot embrace all connections and therefore we have to exclude certain relations (Ibid: 61). Thereafter we can only aim to achieve an approximate description in which we are pushed to select a section of the relations between phenomena. In social sciences specially, the selection of these relations can be notably different, and considering linguistic and cultural aspects the selection of aspects and language to use can even look as arbitrary. This endless possibility of relating, reminds us Paul Feyerabend's defense of the plurality of methods (1986: 29) suggesting the enrichment of theory, its critical potential and seeing this plurality of methods as a more 'humanistic' arrangement.

There are other useful late critiques to the scientific practice that have contributed to unveil difficulties and implications at many levels of the scientific activity. Among others, diverse feminist perspectives on science have highlighted the relevance of recognizing the situatedness of our perspectives and practice (Harding, 1986; 2008). In the same line, late perspectives in anthropology have also pointed the need of including the context and the happenings of the observer as part of the evidence (e.g.

Behar, 2005). In another angle Edgar Morin⁶ has argued for a ‘pertinent knowledge’ in which, among others, the knowledge is contextualized, it revalorizes the direct experience and makes the most of out of the available resources (1999: 15; 2000). In this sense, for the purpose of this text I try to revalorize my experience and to integrate that which is close and coherent to my praxis of living (in Maturana’s terms[1996]), aiming as well of having a clearer, contextualized and more transparent standpoint.

Finally, this paper is written out of common knowledge, with the awareness that most (or all) of the ideas put forward have already been said or thought somewhere else, and I can only trace back a section of these. Just as Foucault has considered as ‘the death of the author’ in which no utterance can have a sole source in a subject (in Loomba, 1998: 35). Attempting to approach in a pragmatic tradition (as in Dewey, 1927; Rorty, 1982) the arguments are brought by their use and by their practical consequences.

After all these metatheoretical remarks, we are able to embark into the core of the text that might demand a certain flexibility of the reader in order to make the most profit of her time spent over these lines. The selection of the authors is likely to be foreign for some readers at some point, and this might demand different paces for reading. As I commented the effort in this paper is to integrate and to be pertinent.

Chapter 2:

Participation in the context of democracy

“Democracy can only exist when no social agent is in conditions to claim mastery of the foundation of society and representative of its totality”

Chantal Mouffe⁷

2.1 Approaching the political

The political can be seen as a contested terrain for fixing the premises for the functioning of a human collective. It is a terrain for the argumentative, it is a terrain

⁶ Edgar Morin is a french multifaceted philosopher and theorist of the ‘complexity’ that has received little attention in the anglo-saxon dominated scientific sphere, in contrast, in the scientific arena in Latina America is one of the key figures for social theory.

⁷ Chantal Mouffe, 2005: 217

for selecting and it is a terrain for defining. We have created a grand political language to try to interpret the happenings in our societies⁸ on the effort to create better image of the phenomena. However, these interpretations seem to be insufficient for our capabilities of action coordination as we can access to contradictory images of the world that hardly any moral system would accept (e.g. preventable hunger and starvation).

Ernesto Laclau has called the political “as the *instituting* moment of society” (1996: 47). It could be seen space for contesting the interpretations on which we stabilize the aspects under which human action happens. The political can also be seen as the territory of the negotiation of the experiences outside our experience; in this sense, Maturana has claimed that all ‘rational’ political systems are “founded on fundamental premises accepted *a priori*” (2001: 34 liberal translation).

Foucault (1984) pointed that the consciousness that humans have of the ‘future’ is the origin of government, authority and politics, as we negotiate choices for the future and the possibilities in it (in Allen, 2004: 124).

Then we can see politics as a discussion about ‘what is out there’, or the ‘lifeworld’⁹, to which, accordingly we must therefore coordinate our action. Hence politics seems to become a moment in which of selection and decision upon what should be considered and what should be dismissed, a complex but central process that seems to be present in a diversity of social processes. How to reach to decide, or to fix the premises for framing our collective action, becomes an extremely complex process that can be approached from many perspectives and has been central of the current discussions on democracy.

Even if we have come to an already organized world ruled with governments and ‘imagined communities’¹⁰, the very existence of the governments or ruling bodies, can be seen to some degree as a decision, even if it is a relatively unconscious one of a human collective immersed in certain courses of action and a certain symbolic net of meanings. Furthermore the government also seems to exist as a belief, as a web of arguments resting on tradition or on hegemonic discourses, or even tangled within themselves, similar to Quine’s models on language and science as web-like of belief (1978).

⁸ Whatever the boundaries of the societies could be, or even as some talk of just society (e.g. Luhmann, 1995). “Concepts like ‘nation’, ‘society’, and ‘culture’ name bits and threaten to turn names into things” (Wolf, 1982: 3).

⁹ Habermas, borrowing from Husserl, has used the term ‘lifeworld’, to refer to that appears given in experience (as phenomena), that can be experienced with others (Outwaite 1996, 317).

¹⁰ I use this expression pointing at Benedict Anderson’s work on the construction and consolidation of the ‘nations’ as imagined communities (1983).

Moreover, any broad approach to the phenomena of politics one has to consider the importance of the communicative level, as is in this level that the common premises are fixed and also in which they can be contested. Habermas approach to communication and the centrality of his focus on democracy has brought diverse elements for discussing the basis of decisions, deliberation, and knowledge, among others. By criticizing the systematic distorted modes of communication, the deformation of these channels by power and ‘the deformed realization of reason in history’, he has pointed towards the possibility of better conditions for communication, under no knowledge domination, on which it could be possible reaching mutual understanding, consensus, and truly ‘rational’ decisions (Habermas, 1984). Nevertheless these idealized positions and the defense of democracy as the project of the Enlightenment and of ‘reason’ have cost Habermas abundant critiques.

It is in this framework of the political that we can start visualizing the centrality of the ‘knowledge’ aspect inside the political, as ‘knowledge’ becomes an important aspect for fixing the common premises for collective action, and it is dependent of the communicative structure.

2.2 Democracy without foundations

Democracy is one of most fundamental political terms in the context of the modern nation-state. At the same time while much is talked about it and traced back to Athens and Sparta, it seems to lose clarity and to be increasingly polysemic and vague. Democracy seems to be one of the most influential discursive symbols of our political global sphere; nonetheless the struggle for its definition or interpretation seems to be very alive. Equally happens with its appendix: ‘participation’, as it seems to be the part of this western consensus on which diverse institutions try to align themselves to. Nowadays, within the boundaries of this socio-historical moment, the discourses on ‘democracy’ and ‘participation’ have had a considerable influence over the configuration of our present societies. Nonetheless both conceptions remain highly contested.

Having its preeminent role in actual political discourses, democracy stands as a political system with an enormous legitimacy. However, if we frame democracy as a political system that every rational individual would choose on idealized conditions as John Rawls or Habermas have suggested (Mouffe, 2005: 151) or to see it as part of a universally legitimate historical process, it seems to risk some of the aspects or principles that democracy (in other views) could stand for. The assertion that all individuals would choose democracy as the best system given idealized conditions; beyond the impossibility for reaching this, it assumes certain common experiences, morality, interpretive frameworks, and others, that the whole humanity would share, reducing the enormous diversity and unreachable social realities to

quasi-metaphysical considerations. Therefore as Chantal Mouffe has insisted, taking her considerations on Wittgenstein, the “allegiance to democratic values and institutions is not based on their superior rationality [...] liberal democratic principles can be defended only as being constitutive of our form of life” (2005: 121). Furthermore she insists that it is through the recognition of liberal democracy as a set of contingent practices that we can understand that it is a conquest worth defending and deepened (Mouffe, 1999: 115).

As Barber has asserted, democracy has foundations and we can trace it back as a center of rich reflection, however our decision for choosing democracy should not only depend on this reflection (Barber, 1996: 352f). Therefore it seems more prudent to approach it as a belief of ours, as decision of ours on how to negotiate our present and our future. Standing from this position we can defend democracy using elements of the same argument. We can define democracy as a system that recognizes the limitations that us as individuals have, and therefore the imminent need of *others* to reach something which ourselves cannot view or conceive.

Then moving forward in this approach, we could suggest that democracy is a space that opens for dialogue and definition on which the distinct views can be included and be contested. Moreover this ‘dialogue and contestation of views’ that democracy should consist of, can be seen to have a dynamic character, in which the understandings of the participants can be revisited, can be negotiable, and they can be deepened, as an ongoing reflexive process. As Benjamin Barber has emphasized “reflexivity once again turns out to be democracy’s great virtue. Democracy is the debate about what democracy is” (Barber, 1996: 355).

2.3 Deeper public participation in democratic theory

The background of the deeper and more direct participation of the population on the decisions can be traced in different ways. As Robert Dahl has said, democratic theory cannot be traced as a single one (1989). The theory associated to ‘participatory democracy’ is one of the most influential approaches on the direct engagement of the lay citizen on decisions. Also what has been recognized as ‘deliberative democracy’, in some of its versions, has also considered the direct engagement of the citizens; nonetheless it mostly highlights the importance of the deliberation aspect in the decisions. For the purpose of the argument of this text some ideas of these two proposals on democracy are put forward.

Much of the current considerations for deeper involvement of the citizens in decision making processes were already present in J.J. Rousseau’s work. He saw that participation was an elementary aspect for decision making on which the individual

could have a greater control over her¹¹ life (Pateman, 1970: 21ff). Participation also contributed to the conformation and integration of the community, enabling the individual to belong to it (Ibid.). Moreover the process of decision could become 'self-sustaining' as the individual learns about the process and about the community (Ibid.). Much of these ideas approached from different perspectives, can also be found in the 20th century in John Dewey's work.

John Stewart Mill, even if he followed his ideas into 'representative democracy', he considered that participation had an important effect on the psyche of the community, on which it contributed for its well being (Pateman, 1970: 26). Also the individual by understanding the locality, its problems, its context and so forth, learns about democracy (Mill 1962 in Pateman, 1970: 27). John Stewart Mill, insisted that the institutions had an educative function in the broadest sense of the word, and that it is by participating that the individual can learn about the political, on which he could change views and opinions (1962: 102 in Pateman, 1970: 29).

On her side Pateman also highlighted the importance of participation in decision making in the different realms of collective life, and similarly the vital role of the educative function of participation (Pateman, 1970: 103ff). She defined, contrary to other 'partial' participations, as "full participation" the process on which each individual in the decision making process has equal power to determine the outcome of the decisions (Ibid: 106)

A recent influential author on the theories on participatory democracy has been Benjamin Barber. He argues for the idea of a 'self-governing community of citizens' embarking on common purposes and mutual action mostly by the existence of participatory institutions and by common civic attitudes, rather than by some 'nature' (Barber, 1984: 117). In his version of participatory democracy, the: "active citizens govern themselves directly [...], not necessarily at every level and in every instance, but frequently enough and in particular when basic policies are being decided and when significant power is being deployed" (Barber, 1984: 151).

In occasions closely to participatory democracy and even sometimes overlapping is the theory on deliberative democracy. In general its theorists also argue for an enlargement of the public participation, but more centrally on the importance of the deliberative practices inside the processes of decision making.

Two theorists on deliberative democracy, Gutman and Thompson (2004), have insisted that all reasons for the decisions should be public. For them, the content of the arguments on which a given decision is taken it should be available to the public,

¹¹ It is used 'her' rather than 'his' in the text as a linguistic move that some feminist scholars and others such as Richard Rorty have used in English language.

as this would enable the possibility of continuous dialogue, criticism and to have better basis to establish new decisions (2004: 5ff). Under the premise of what they call ‘incomplete understanding’ is that deliberative democracy can be recognized as ‘provisional’ and therefore it can have a self-correcting capacity (Ibid: 57). The deliberative aspect can be seen as this engagement or dialogue done about the reasons for the existence of laws and policies that bound people’s lives themselves (Ibid: 20). The degrees of deliberation, and on which decisions should happen is something has been an issue of discussion, but there is a relative consensus among different theorist on deliberative democracy, that not all practices should be deliberative but all practices should be at some point deliberative justified (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Dryzek, 2010)

On a different late line of discussion on deliberative democracy, an influential theorist of deliberative democracy, John Dryzek, has emphasized on the importance of the ‘discursive’ dimension on deliberative democracy. He has defined discourses, drawing on the perspectives portrayed by Foucault, as “sets of concepts, categories, and ideas that provide ways to understand and act in the world”, even if we may not be aware of them (Dryzek, 2006: iv). His approach on discursive democracy, proposes the engagement of discourses in a deliberative setting. These discourses can come from different sources of communicative power in the public sphere, from individuals to organizations and governments working in a ‘non-authoritative fashion’ (Dryzek, 2006: 24). It becomes of great importance to attempt to address the discourses and to recognize their importance in ordering the world, as for “the potential for the structure of the discourses to itself become the target of popular reflection and conscious action” (Ibid.).

These briefly portrayed views on democracy and its versions reviewed already portray much of the discussions addressed latter of this text in relation to knowledge and participatory processes of decision making.

2.4 The critiques to participation

Participatory forms of democracy are not all possibilities and benefits. They do not lack of criticisms, in the next paragraphs some of these arguments are presented.

One central concern in relation to the direct engagement of the citizens has been in relation of the practicability of the engagement of many of the integrants of a community on the decisions of the government. This has been illustrated by Robert Dahl as ‘democracy on different scales’ (1998). He argues that the smaller the democratic unit the greater potential for citizen participation and the less need of

representation; conversely, the larger the unit the greater difficulties for participation and the greater need for representation (Dahl, 1998: 110). In this sense Dahl is skeptical of the attempts of involving very large amounts of citizens in what he calls 'assembly democracy'; as in one hand, it could require sizable time and resources for effective participation of the citizens; and secondly, examples such as in Vermont, New England, show that the amount of effective participants is considerably limited and the quality of the decisions shows no great improvements in relation to other localities with representative democracy (1998: 103ff).

In these lines, a dilemma arising from the critiques of involving the population in the decisions of the government is if whether the citizens participating will be able to make better decisions given the right conditions, or if the government can do better decisions maintaining or achieving to its actual ideal structure (policy making, civil servants, expert regime, etc.). This question has no easy answer, Robert Dahl suggests that perhaps there is no universal answer to it, suggesting that each locality may have to deal with different forms (1998: 123f).

Some of the arguments against participation is that the knowledge base for the decisions may decrease its quality by involving 'ignorant' citizens. It becomes relevant to recognize that whatever form of organization in the government is decided, it will suppose a certain form of selecting, allocating and organizing the available knowledge that can be found in the community (in any of its forms) in order to make the best possible decision. Each decision supposes to be based on certain knowledge about the reality in which it is supposed to act upon. In other words, certain premises about the reality from the discourses in society are selected and assumed as truth in order to take a decision. Hence, the government seeks to select certain knowledge to create the base of the decision, and sometimes there can be a great difference when the representatives select this knowledge (or premises), to when it is discussed and selected in a participatory setting by the citizens. This issue becomes more complicated when we bring forward the 'scientific knowledge' issue. The scientific knowledge has become one of the most legitimate forms of knowledge for most of the societies in the world, and there is generalized trust on decisions taken on scientific basis (Fischer, 2003: 209f). Thus, it is a common argument, that the scientific base of the decisions is risked by allowing the population to participate in the decisions. This argument is challenged by distinct forms of participation and deliberation that include scientific discourses (e.g. Deliberative Poll). And there are diverse examples in which what is thought as scientific can be questioned by the knowledge of the population (Greenwood & Levin: 2006). Nevertheless the issue remains a contentious matter of discussion that can be addressed on many sides.

2.5 Critiques in the context of Development

In a change of context on the discussion, participation has been seen as a central component of democracy, but has also been treated as an element that can also contribute for different collective activities such as in ‘development’ efforts. The discourses on development and on democracy have been propagated almost in a parallel way throughout the world. According to Rahnema, the notion of participation appeared in the context of development for the first time 1950’s (1992: 117). Participation in the context of development has often been seen as an element which will make projects and decisions more effective, more efficient, more equal, more transparent, far reaching, owned by the people, empowering, and many others. Also among the arguments pro-participation in development, has been the inclusion of population traditionally excluded from projects or policies, allowing them to influence the decisions affecting their lives.

However, participation has also received numerous critiques. As participation has become part of the official discourse on democracy or development, its wide spread use has created distinct interpretations of the term, in many times interpreted from the same authoritarian context. This issue among others has created a certain shift of what participation represents, passing from belonging mostly from popular movements to a formally institutionalized setting (Rahnema, 1992; Mosse, 2001).

Some of the usual critiques of participation are that it does not necessarily make the decision-making process more efficient, effective and far reaching, and sometimes can cause a great waste of resources (e.g. Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Moreover, much examples of participation neither have accomplished ownership, transparency, nor necessarily represent the excluded (e.g. Barnes et al. 2007). Some authors have exemplified how the ‘local knowledge’ which is supposed to have a central role for participation, is defined arbitrarily or even constructed by the ones driving the projects or policy (Mohan, 2001; Mosse, 2001).

As we can read in these previous paragraphs participation has not lacked of criticisms. These criticisms can also help to understand much of the skepticism that exists in relation to expanding the citizen participation on the public decisions.

2.6 Participatory Processes of Decision Making

There are considerable obstacles to participatory processes, among others increasing the complexity of the decisions, reducing their quality and, in occasions, putting at

risk their success. Nevertheless the critiques of the participatory processes can be less consistent than what is commonly thought if we focus directly on the distinct examples of participatory processes of decision making.

The Participatory Processes of Decision Making (PPDM) can be participatory in different moments and by different arrangements. Various examples of PPDM created in recent years show great diversity on how the participatory settings can be constructed. These display that problems that exist in certain participatory arrangements are nonexistent in others. Hence, while we could generalize certain problems of the participatory processes, there is a great diversity of participatory procedures, or techniques, that produce entirely different outcomes. For instance, while some processes are focused on promoting greater inclusion, others insist on the quality of the deliberation, the representativeness of the population, or on the voting dimension, among others.

To take an example, a central aspect that differs in different participatory processes, is related to how the deliberation and learning process happens inside the PPDM. For instance, some arrangements such as the Deliberative Polling (Fishkin, 1988) bring a representative sample of lay citizens together with scientist and experts to provide assessment about a specific matter. This process has constant moderation on the deliberation in order to avoid waste of time and ensure positive results. This mode of deliberation presents a structured setting and agenda that permits a certain outcome, however it does not ensure that the population involved will continue influencing the political agenda with their learned knowledge. Contrasting to this example, another process with direct engagement of the population, the ‘participatory budgeting’ in its early examples (e.g. Porto Alegre, BR) in which the population deliberates in different levels about the expenses of the government. This PPDM permits that the discussion and the learned aspects by the citizens continue to develop in an ongoing participating effort. Nevertheless in this process the expert assessment is limited and less structured, hence the quality of the deliberation might change. Therefore, each example shows certain benefits and certain problems. Thus it can be difficult to generalize about the problems of the PPDM, since every arrangement of the participatory process will permit specific outcomes and will present specific problems.

Furthermore it could be said that participation procedures or techniques are in an early stage of development, since many of them are relatively recent and the procedures have not passed through a long process of trial and error and knowledge accumulation. This issue supports the view on the need of improving our PPDM both in practice and in its theoretical standpoint.

2.7 PPDM and knowledge, a preliminary approach

The reflection on participatory processes of decision making requires frameworks that allow us to appreciate the complexity of these processes in order to understand what is at stake inside them. All participatory processes are different both in their structure as well as in the context they are applied. This makes difficult to create generalizations about the PPDM. Moreover, the criteria for measuring the success of the PPDM does not always account for all the dimensions that can be relevant for the process. For example, if the success of a participatory process is measured by Good Governance indicators such as ‘voice and accountability’, ‘government effectiveness’, ‘regulatory quality’, ‘rule of law’ and others (Rothstein & Teorell, 2012: 17), other central aspects of the participatory process such as the ‘self-sustaining’ dimension of the decisions can be easily dismissed. Hence the reflection about the PPDM needs to adapt its focus to account for a diversity of processes that could remain obscured to some degree on conventional approaches to political decisions, at this point is where perspectives focusing on other aspects such as knowledge can be of use.

I suggest that by understanding the knowledge dimension we can also appraise better certain aspects inside the PPDM. Perhaps it is difficult to find any human dimension that can be set apart from the knowledge aspect. Indeed, to attempt to show all the relations between knowledge and PPDM remains unattainable for a text of this nature. Nevertheless, the knowledge dimension, as I will try to show can be of crucial importance to appraise certain central processes in the PPDM.

The treatment that knowledge has had in the context of PPDM in many approaches, has been limited in most cases to single-sided definitions, mainly: as learning (e.g. J.S. Mill,), as scientific v.s. local knowledge (e.g. Fischer, 2003), or as information (e.g. Fishkin, 1995). Moreover some approaches in many occasions could denote some ambiguity on the definitions of knowledge. Let’s take for example Fishkin’s assertion in his example of Deliberative Polls, that could “give us our best glimpse into what a more informed and engaged electorate would be like”(Fishkin & Ackerman, 2003: 12). When Fishkin asserts that the population is ‘informed’, it supposes an idea of knowing direct facts about reality. And when we start digging into theories of knowledge we can assert that the issue of getting facts of reality and the issue of interpreting (knowing) is indeed very complex and controversial. Thereafter the theory on knowledge may be useful in the context of PPDM as having a ‘thicker’ conception of knowledge could allow us to appreciate a complex process that is not only related to a wide array of process, but that it is pervasive for the PPDM as a whole.

It is in this sense that this text suggests the importance of the ‘knowledge’ dimension, as a way to widen the scope of the aspects to be considered in the PPDM. In this text, three dimensions are explored: *the learning dimension, the inclusion/exclusion process, and the discourses influencing the process*. These three processes have been widely explored on theories related to knowledge; hence by relating them into the context of democracy and participation, certain central processes in the PPDM may have a clearer account of their complexity.

The next chapter on knowledge might be the most challenging for the reader as it presents sometimes condensed and abstract perspectives. It presents a considerably different organization and way of writing than the current chapter. This way of developing the argument is chosen due the complexity and ‘distance’ of the theory on knowledge, and for presenting a sufficiently clear account on the selected perspectives on knowledge to the reader.

Chapter 3

On knowledge

“Whenever we want to compel somebody else to do something according to our wishes, and we cannot or do not want to use brutal force, we offer what we claim is an objective rational argument. We do this under the implicit or explicit pretence that the other cannot refuse what our argument claims because its validity as such rests on its reference to the real”

Humberto Maturana¹²

The attempt of addressing the term ‘knowledge’ is difficult and fussy task, as it is not only a polysemic notion, but it is a recurring and present term in our everyday speech and it has also been subject of long enquiry. The matter of ‘knowledge’ as well is currently a subject of lively theoretical debate. In order to answer, the first sub-question of the text, *what theoretical approaches to knowledge may be useful for interpreting the PPDM?* Is necessary to define what does this concept may refer to. And secondly the relevant theoretical approaches will be presented.

How to address ‘knowledge’ is not only pressing for the phenomena we try to explore but for much (if not of all) social phenomena as this matter encloses great complexities related to our possibility of knowing and of talking about phenomena.

¹² Humberto Maturana, 1992: p.52

Interpreting what ‘knowledge’ stands for, will serve as a base to differentiate between its possible uses and to select from some of the diverse interpretations created in different traditions. The different literature addressing the term ‘knowledge’ can have drastically different interpretations of the term and therefore can drive us towards considerably different ways of approaching it. As I mentioned, part of the contribution of this text could be in relating certain theoretical perspectives on knowledge to the political sphere related to participation and decision-making processes.

‘Knowledge’ has been a matter of very long enquiry in the so called ‘western’ tradition. The discussion can be traced back to time before Plato, some 2500 years ago (Glaserfeld, 2005: 24) and currently is still subject of fierce debate which is not likely to end soon due its centrality in science and much beyond. So far, I have selected and discarded theories to bring forward my arguments, however for treating ‘knowledge’, the selection of theories might appear even more reduced and arbitrary. Many would consider easier to use approaches closer to the topic of research, perhaps novel perspectives such as ‘knowledge management’(e.g. van Buren, 2006) or ‘knowledge democracy’(e.g. Veld, 2010), nonetheless while these remain valuable, many of these approaches work already under a fixed definition of ‘knowledge’ and a very specific approach. My intention in the next pages is to review perspectives on ‘knowledge’ that in contrast between themselves and against the research topic, can help interpret participation and decision under a different light and hopefully add something to the discussion.

As it has been mentioned the literature on knowledge is immense and varies from field to field. Each account could open towards very different perspectives in relation to participatory processes of decision making. For this text I intend not to fix a single definition, but at the same time, it is beyond the possibilities of this paper to bring an account of all relevant perspectives. Instead I try to bring two ‘sets’ of theories that could bring an account on knowledge that presents much of the perspectives that I have considered relevant for the topic.

The theories brought forward for the argument belong to different disciplines and fields of study, mainly: philosophy, sociology of knowledge, ‘genetic epistemology’ and others. In this section it can be observed the interdisciplinary standpoint of the text. Each of the authors which we will address has researched extensively on the issue of ‘knowledge’ directly or indirectly. Thereafter the ideas put forward will only be selections of their thought sometimes complemented by some other author’s ideas. Although, it might be relevant to mention that the initial author might have also developed certain ideas covering other matters in question. In other words, the ideas are brought by their relevance for the argument, dismissing others which in other contexts could be relevant to understand the work of a certain author.

The following section aims to bring 2 ‘sets’ of theories on knowledge that I suggest can be useful for dealing with knowledge and disclosing a number of relevant features inside participatory processes of decision making: the learning dimension, the discourses, and the inclusion/exclusion process. Part of the issues of some attempts of addressing knowledge has been the lack of a robust conception of it, or the lack clarity of what this conception may embrace. Hence it becomes crucial importance for the effort of dealing with knowledge to have a clear conception of what ‘knowledge’ might embrace. Nonetheless, while the following perspectives try to give a robust approach to knowledge, they only present certain interpretations on a topic that remains open for continuous discussion.

3.1 Defining Knowledge

If we approaching from a poststructuralist perspective on language, the word ‘knowledge’, as any other word in a language, gets its meaning by having a certain relation to other words (or ‘signs’). As in structuralism, the meaning is seen as socially constructed, the relation between form (the word) and content (what it may refer) is seen as arbitrary. Moreover the relation between words is not fixed, as it changes with the context of use in a sentence and during time; therefore the ‘fixation of signs’ can be seen as contingent (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002: 25f). In this sense, also following some of Wittgenstein assertions on the meaning of a word, the attempt for using a term is to draw on the already existing uses of the word rather than giving an explanatory generalization (Murat, 2009). Therefore the term ‘knowledge’ in this text will be used within the uses and meanings that are current, and are from these that we can work on our interpretations.

An initial definition that can guide in respect of what ‘knowledge’ makes reference is that of Berger and Luckmann in the context of the discussion of sociology of knowledge. For them, ‘knowledge’ can be understood “as *the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics*” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 13, cursive added); Considering the ‘real’ as the phenomena that we recognize independent to our volition (Ibid.). Much of what can be said in relation to knowledge is stated in this definition, and that is why this definition can serve us throughout the essay as a reference to the term knowledge. However with this statement are not exhausted the possible uses of the term. This is one of the reasons why Berger and Luckmann also argued that sociology of knowledge should study “whatever passes for knowledge in a society” (Ibid: 15).

Departing from the previous definition of knowledge, we can see that it supposes a certain access to the real and from this access is that we are able to find specific recurring characteristics in this reality. This has been subject of long philosophical discussions as these assertions enclose great complexities. Historically there has

been a tendency to see our individual access to reality as an unequivocal process on which we can make universal true assertions about phenomena around us. Even today, after countless critiques to this perspective, much (or most) human activities are still impregnated with this view of certainty and objectivity; in occasions this can be especially obvious and noxious at the political level.

3.2 Knowing and knowledge

“When we examine more closely how we get to know this world, we invariably find that we cannot separate our history of actions –biological and social- from how this world appears to us. It is so obvious and close that it is very hard to see”.

Maturana and Varela¹³

We can scrutinize briefly the question of possibility of ‘knowledge’. One first level of awareness that we can identify directly from our experience is that of ‘knowing’. In classical philosophy knowing (epistemé) was seen as a passive reception of a being (Allen, 2004: 96) In Heidegger’s thought the phenomena of knowing and understanding is present and is a constituting part of our Being (1927, in Ramberg and Gjesdal, 2005). However, in Heidegger’s view, that what is opened to us, that what we know, is situated historically, linguistically, contextually and so forth; and it has a certain horizon for interpretation (Ibid.). Maturana and Varela, from a very different standpoint in biology, stated (closer to later Heidegger) that “every interaction of an organism, every behavior observed, can be assessed by an observer as a cognitive act”, and therefore “to live is to know” (1989: 174). Thereafter, if we move forward on these views, dealing with ‘knowledge’ is to deal with a situation close and always present in us as being this form of living entities, nonetheless it can be for us outstandingly hard to grasp.

The phenomenon of ‘knowing’ is inseparable to that of ‘knowledge’ just as their etymological tie. These have been largely addressed in different scientific fields, although each field has addressed these in a particularly specialized and compartmentalized manner. While each scientific interpretation seems to deal with a specific number of issues, they might also overlap at some moments. Disciplines and sub-disciplines have taken specific interpretations of these matters as reference frameworks, sometimes dismissing other bodies of knowledge that could contribute importantly to the matter in question. In the following paragraphs, I will present a few influential perspectives on ‘knowing’ and ‘knowledge’ that while not necessarily recent, they are still authoritative for specific field; as for the purpose of this text they present valuable interpretations and an opportunity of bridging some of

¹³ Maturana and Varela, 1989: 23

their elements for the arguments of apprising the *learning dimension* inside the participator processes of decision making.

One account that has been relatively marginalized in recent years from political literature, although still central for psychology, education sciences and the like, is what has been considered ‘constructivism’ and views associated to it. These perspectives, in my view, still provide an account of the foundations of knowledge that could complement importantly the dominant perspectives of knowledge on the political. In effect, I would suggest that some of these perspectives if accepted still have much to offer for considering not only the learning dimension in the PPDM but for much of our political arrangements. Some perspectives of Ernst von Glasserfeld and Jean Piaget will be briefly reviewed.

In general, the constructivist views point towards a definition of knowledge as something dynamic and done in action, on which the knower is implicated on what she knows. Ernst von Glasserfeld defines two principles of what he defines as radical constructivism (1996: 25, liberal translation [LT]):

1. “Knowledge is not received passively, nor through senses, nor through communication, but it is actively constructed by the knowing subject.
2. The function of cognition is adaptive and serves the organization of the experiential world of the subject, not to the discovery of an ontologically objective reality.”

Taking a stand away from a knowledge as a representation of a world independent from the observer; knowledge, for constructivists, refers to *conceptual structures*¹⁴ that given the context and linguistic setting, the knowing subjects consider useful or viable. Although, this does not deny a reality independent of the observer (Ibid: 29f).

Jean Piaget’s constructivist approaches, or as he named his research on ‘genetic epistemology’, were drawing on diverse notions mostly associated to evolutionary theory. He insisted that knowing should be seen as an *adaptive* function (1977). Our knowledge could not be a direct ‘representation’ of the world, our knowledge is a series of conceptual structures that aim to attain being adapted, seeking for an equilibrium. In this context, equilibrium would be a state on which *the cognitive structures of the knowing agent would predict accurately certain expected results, without conceptual conflicts or contradictions* (Glasserfeld, 1996: 33). Maturana and Varela have pointed that, “we admit knowledge whenever we observe an effective (or adequate) behavior in a given context” (1989: 174). But it is indeed by the

¹⁴ ‘Structure’ for the constructivists after Piaget is a central abstract notion that makes reference to the shape or pattern of the cognition of the individuals, or, can be seen as the form that cognition takes in a given moment (Rosas and Balmaceda, 2008: 13).

encounter of certain situations or in Piagetan vocabulary *perturbations*, in some way unexpected results, that can be explained how we are to build our knowledge. For explaining this Piaget, uses the term of *schema* to refer to a series of cognitive contents, such as memories, concepts, movements, and so forth (anything that has passed through experience and retained in some way), which are intertwined and tend to trigger each other (Brainerd, 1978 in Rosas and Balmaceda, 2008: 17). In this sense, the schema (schemé) is built generally in the next process; we recognize a given situation, we recognize an association between elements of the situation and then we expect of a certain result. When this process has a ‘perturbation’ or some situation that somehow modifies the expected outcomes, then cognitive change might happen¹⁵. For instance, in a simple level the baby has a rattle which she moves and creates a certain agreeable sound (she creates an association), then she finds a toy with a similar shape to the rattle and moves it expecting the agreeable sound, although the sound doesn’t come out, then a perturbation happens and then the cognitive change can happen. In a more complex example: I always had a meal when I sat on the table at dinner time and I never questioned how did this happened, my mother would serve me food and I would be satisfied afterwards, but one day I arrived at the dinner table as usual and there was no food, that perturbation makes me wonder why this has happened. At this point for a start my certainty of eternal food coming out of the table crumbles, then I might blame my mother, and she might point me to other phenomena I had not taken into account. Then I might also find that the acquisition of food is linked to other phenomena which I had not considered, and therefore this perturbation opens to me *a world of relations* I had previously no need to consider.

At this point we might start to appraise why our knowledge is necessarily linked to experience or the possibilities that have been opened to through our senses, and whatever we might do, we are always necessarily bounded by this situation.

Piaget suggested that everything that we incorporate in our schema has to deal with whatever the schema has already built upon. Therefore whatever new we incorporate in our schema (or learn) resounds with the rest that we have learned, and whatever we have learned will determine in some degree what and how we incorporate of new elements. Piaget has asserted: “all assimilatory schema tends to feed itself, in other words, to incorporate its external elements that are compatible with its nature” (Piaget, 1975: 92 in Rosas and Balmaceda, 2008: 23, LT). By giving importance to this previous view, we can realize that whatever idea or proposition that we accept is also directly related to whatever has passed and retained through our experience. Maturana has asserted in this same sense “what we accept is not a reference to

¹⁵ The two main operations for Piaget for the conformation and transformation of the schema are assimilation and accommodation. A clear and synthetic account can be found in: Ernst von Glasserfeld, 1990: 23ff.

something independent from us, but a reformulation of the experience with elements of experience that satisfies some coherence criteria that ourselves build explicitly or implicitly” (2001: 31, LT).

The constructivists also have written extensively in relation to knowledge, language and ‘higher abstractions’, however I will just highlight a few ideas. For Glasserfeld the acquisition of language is necessarily brought from elements of our own experience and it happens as a constant modification of the conceptual structures, which is a lifelong process (1996: 41). Then on this perspective there is a subjective element in language that cannot be avoided. By accepting this, it cannot stand anymore the argument in which words transmit knowledge or that someone understands exactly what we mean, as this would suppose identical conceptual structures. Therefore is possible to assert that “comprehending is a matter of adjustment rather than similarity” (Ibid.: 42). Then to talk about knowledge explained in language it supposes a great deal of socialization for constructing a wide vocabulary, and to have constructed and adapted the associated meanings sufficiently. Moreover our attempts to share understandings will always be approximate, and as we have seen no set of experiences is equal, and since full experience is non transferable, we are faced with the issue of having always distinct conceptual structures, and therefore different interpretations.

It is relevant to see that for the constructivists our knowledge is associated to our experiential world, in which we seek to achieve equilibrium or coherence in our conceptual nets (schema) upon the criteria of viability that we have ourselves built from our same experience (Glasserfeld, 1996: 36). These views, centered in knowledge as something active in experience, can also be related to some arguments of pragmatists, for instance John Dewey has stated: “If we see that knowing is not the act of an outside spectator but of a participator inside the natural and social scene, then the true object of knowledge resides in the consequences of directed action” (1929: 157).

For some of the readers unfamiliar to constructivism but familiar to political literature many of the ideas just reviewed might seem akin to other perspectives on political philosophy or other sociological accounts¹⁶. Indeed, I deem that much of these ideas are available in different theoretical backgrounds, however I considered the articulation of the models on which constructivists approach knowledge are still valuable to apprise some aspects of the arise of knowledge, the possibility of learning and its complexity. Moreover I choose these models for a pragmatic use, as they organize and provide elements which other perspectives closer to the political might not, or might not give the importance I am seeking for my later arguments in relation to the learning dimension in the PPDM.

¹⁶ Those familiar with political psychology might be more familiar with these constructivist perspectives.

We have occupied so far on how knowledge is there to be, and models attempting to describe some aspects of the process of knowing. At this point it might be useful to make a distinction between some uses of the term knowledge. On one hand, the use of the word knowledge makes reference to an ontological situation of us as human, for instance in the use of the word as in: “the child acquires knowledge from experience”. However the term knowledge also can make reference to a distinction between qualities of knowledge, more effective or improved knowledge, for instance in the use of the word: “he has better knowledge than us”. On the first use of the term, it is opened that we are all agents of knowledge, it is given epistemologically. However the second use of the term knowledge, as some better knowledge, it is opened that it is possible to assert between different knowledges by degree of quality (of those characteristics of the real), and therefore there must be some criteria to assert that. This second use of the term, knowledge as quality of knowledge, might involve difficulties to determine it, especially at a social-order level. Asserting knowledge or determining what counts as knowledge at the social-order level is central for the question of including the knowledge of the individuals in participatory decision making. The following perspective on knowledge deals with this later use of the term.

3.3 Power/Knowledge

“The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself.”
Michael Foucault¹⁷,

The second perspective to review on knowledge is that of Michael Foucault, one that has been deeply influential in a wide range of social sciences and humanities. As for my text, this perspective on knowledge creates a clear bridge between theory of knowledge and theory on democracy. This perspective is concerned with political matters, nevertheless it has rarely been used to approach actual examples of PPDM; partly due the level of abstraction of these ideas. As it may be expected I cannot review all Foucault’s ideas on knowledge, as for the size of the task, the sometimes shifting arguments on Foucault’s writings; specially considering the centrality in Foucault’s work of the conceptions which we treat: knowledge and truth. However I will attempt to make an interpretation of some of his work bringing forth some key conceptions on which we are to deal with in this context, contributing to bridge

¹⁷ Michael Foucault, 1980: 133

knowledge with PPDM in two levels: on the the discourses influencing the process and the inclusion/exclusion of knowledges.

For Foucault knowledge is constantly associated or intertwined to 'discourse'. Discourse is a central notion in Foucault, which started in his work on madness; by studying how the category of 'madness' as an identity, was created by certain systems (Loomba, 1998: 38). These systems were identified as the 'order of discourse' as the domain where knowledge was produced (Ibid.). Discourse could be seen as the material medium where knowledge or truth are to exist; Discourse "is made of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined" (Foucault, 1972: 117). Foucault's perspective on discourses is very extensive, showing it as a pervasive element for determining domains of action, the valid, the possible in the order and structure of society as well as our private lives.

Inseparable from discourse and from any human setting is power. As we have seen, power for Foucault is an element deeply rooted in all social contexts; power can be seen to have a "capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault, 1980: 39). This perspective opens to an analysis of power considering a greater complexity, its multiple levels and multiple entanglements. Moreover power cannot be dissociated from knowledge, as the relation between these two is intimate and constant.

This relation is perhaps best understood through the concept of 'truth'. For Foucault also truth is part of the establishment of knowledge or of its validation, and therefore truth also has its intricacies with power:

“‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth.” (Foucault, 1980: 133)

From this perspective, what is established as the 'regime of truth' in a given context, determine how we are to frame the real, including ourselves in it therefore determining the possible in on action and thought. Then, when we think of truth, it cannot be a passive achievement of what is out there by an individual in isolation, or by reaching certain ideal conditions of observation: "truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power" (Foucault, 1980: 131). Hence the relevance of scrutinizing the complexity on how these 'regimes of truth' are to be constructed and maintained,

and their deep and complex influence for the whole process of organization of society, the individuals and the possible domains of action within.

In this same line Foucault's thought have set the ground for the study of what could count as knowledge in a society, or how is created the legitimate knowledge, what can or should be included and which should not by influence of a certain 'regime of truth', one central issue later on this text.

In general for Foucault there is an association between what is socially recognized as knowledge and those 'dominant' discourses; those which have a higher status and maintain themselves by specific power relations. These relations between knowledge and power, among others, have made Foucault in some of his later work to use the expression 'power/knowledge'.

From Foucault's perspective, it is possible to distinguish among different knowledges, and especially between the privileged or dominant knowledges and the 'subjugated knowledges'. For Foucault there are two ways we can see the 'subjugated knowledges'; first as a those "historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization" (Foucault, 1976 [1980]: 81). This first view points towards the selection of historical contents or those contents which are deemed as irrelevant or useless for building the narrative of history and to present valid or 'legitimate' knowledge. Secondly, Foucault also saw as 'subjugated knowledges' the "knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (Ibid.: 82). In this sense, this opens towards all those knowledges which remain normally disdained, denied or unobserved.

The 'subjugated knowledges' are relevant for the question of including the knowledge of the population in the decisions. In the context of participatory processes of decision making is sought the inclusion of a greater diversity of knowledges, hence the relevance of the effort to interpret which could be considered 'subjugated knowledges' in a given context, and to attempt to address or engage with them. However, these subjugated knowledges are also elusive, as for being subjugated they are also to a degree unseen. At this point is relevant to highlight that while Foucault exemplified among certain cases such as the views of patients in clinics or hospitals and others, his view remained considerably abstract. Therefore the interpretation of how to determine or to identify 'subjugated knowledges' remains relatively open, a virtue of Foucault's work in a way, but at the same time an extra difficulty for those attempting to address this conception.

These paragraphs tried to give a certain idea about some of Foucault's perspectives on knowledge, on which we will deal latter in the text. As I mentioned previously,

Foucault’s approach can be useful to understand firstly the pervasiveness of the discourses, and secondly to account the inclusions and exclusions of knowledges in the processes of participation.

This chapter on ‘knowledge’ did not attempt to redeem the concept of knowledge or to give an unequivocal definition of it. It has rather been attempted to draw upon existing uses and perspectives of it. The theoretical approaches explored tried to deal with matters relevant for the study of the participatory processes of decision making, namely: the learning dimension, the discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process.

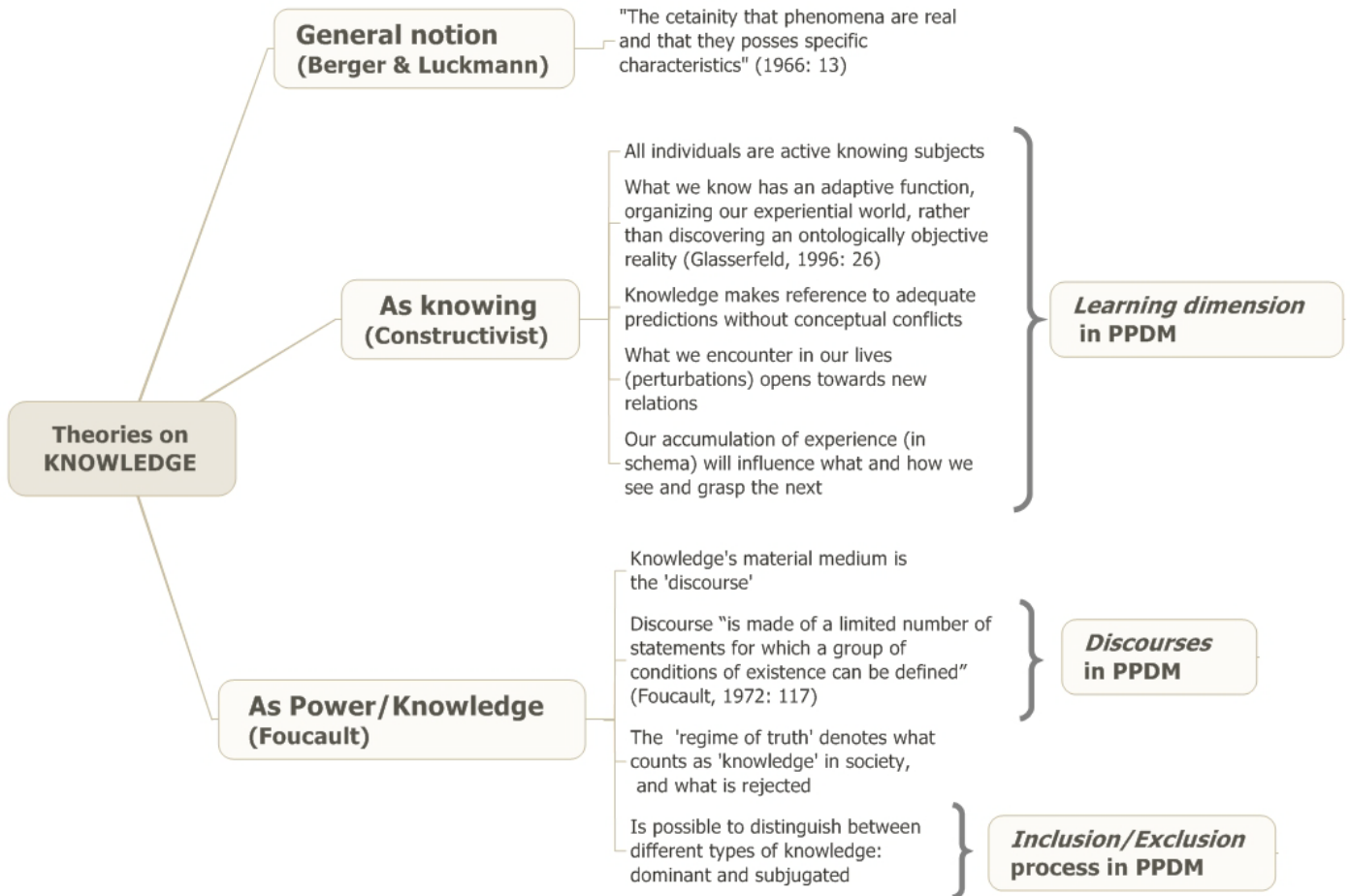


Figure 1. Summary to the theories on knowledge for the considered dimensions of study of Participatory Processes of Decision Making

The Figure 1, displays as a form of summary, the considered theoretical approaches to knowledge relevant for apprising the mentioned aspects of the PPDM.

The previous account presented a selection of theoretical perspectives to knowledge that may be useful for interpreting the PPDM. As it was mentioned this perspective only focused on the 3 aspects in question in this paper (at the right side of the figure 1, these aspects are associated to the theories and their content). The revised perspectives on knowledge can contribute for enhancing our understanding of the PPDM, even though they may present extra difficulties for actually accounting for these dimensions inside actual examples of PPDM. In the rest of the paper it will be tried to show an alternative for accounting for the 3 aspects in the PPDM which the knowledge dimension might help us understand.

Chapter 4

Knowledge and Participatory Processes of Decision Making

The present chapter tries to bring together some of the perspectives reviewed on knowledge and participatory processes, by answering the second sub-question of this text: *“What aspects of the participatory processes of decision making can the knowledge dimension help us understand?”* As the reader could assert, this question has been already partly answered, by pointing at the: learning dimension, the discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process. Due the nature of this text it is not possible to provide an exhaustive answer to this question or to show all the possible relations. Hence, in this section it will be further explored the relevance of the mentioned aspects and how could these be related to the study of PPDM.

As it was commented, ‘knowledge’ is not sought to be the key feature that would allow us to disclose the key central matters inside PPDM, instead, ‘knowledge’ is seen as a useful word or metaphor around which we can interpret (draw) central features of the process of decision making. The diverse theories and the existing thought around this term can help create a framework on which we can interpret and assess the Participatory Processes of Decision Making (PPDM).

In this chapter each of the mentioned aspects (learning, discourses and inclusion/exclusion) will be briefly explored, reviewing its theoretical foundations as

well as its importance in the context of PPDM. By revising each of the aspects bridged between ‘knowledge’ and PPDM it may be clarified what they make reference to and as well as their relevance for understanding the PPDM. Each of the aspects may open toward central dimensions in the PPDM.

4.1 The Learning Dimension

The first aspect to revise in relation to knowledge and PPDM is the ‘learning dimension’. The “Learning Dimension” makes reference to the interactions and circumstances on which the citizens build their knowledge about the issues in question and about the community and its context (region, nation, world). In other words, the learning dimension makes reference to how the learning happens inside the participatory process. In the PPDM, the learning dimension becomes relevant to consider as an objective of the process and as a circumstance to take into account inside it.

The ‘learning’ matter has been central for most of the arguments for more participatory forms of democracy from Rousseau (1762) till Dryzek (2012). Following Carole Pateman’s arguments (1970), the decisions of the community can only become self-sustaining if the citizens know about the community and they are progressively learning about it.

In other views, many of the arguments in relation to learning, have insisted in the following perspectives: recognizing that all citizens are knowing beings; that citizens already know relevant issues about the community; that citizens learn by facing the phenomena in their pragmatic motive (or by facing ‘perturbations’ in Piagetan terms); and that citizens are an unwavering base for decisions, since they are affected by the decisions and they seem to remain on the territory (community). Thereafter , in this perspective, the learning aspect becomes an objective of the participatory process, as it is the base for self-sustaining decisions; and at the same time a can be approached as a circumstance occurring in it, since the citizens are learning constantly during the process of participation.

As we reviewed in the previous chapter, the theories on knowledge offer plentiful elements to understand how we can get to know and how this learning process might happen. We read that knowledge is not something passively acquired by the subject about an ontologically objective reality; knowledge is rather constructed in relation to the experiential world of the subject (Glasserfeld, 1996). Hence this argument brought to the context of participatory decisions allows interpreting that what the citizens know has to do with their experiential world, and that is by their pragmatic experience that they may learn about the community. James Fishkin (1995) has

exemplified this drawing on 'Plato's cave'. Fishkin compares our democracies to Plato's example on which an individual is chained from childhood inside a cave, having access only to some distorted images, considering these images as the real world (1995: 14). In this sense, our democracies create a similar circumstance on which the citizen does not have the conditions to 'experience' the real world, much of the political world is kept behind the stage, and the citizen unlearns the political (Ibid: 15f).

A common critique to participatory processes has been that the citizens do not have the appropriate knowledge for deciding (in section 2.4). In many contexts this may be very close to truth. Nevertheless Fishkin's perspective (1995) allows us to see that this lack of knowledge is also consequence of the circumstances where decisions have been normally taken: apart from the public by a reduced group or elite. Hence if decisions are taken in a circumstance where knowing about the community becomes relevant, necessary and related to the lives of the public, it is likely that citizens will improve their knowledge. Berger and Luckmann have insisted that our knowledge "is structured in terms of relevances. Some of these are determined by immediate pragmatic interests of mine, others by my general situation in society" (1966: 59).

If the citizens are to decide the conditions in which they exist, it is necessary that the citizens become knowledgeable about the community. Hence, the importance that the social arrangement permits the citizens to learn about the community. John Dewey's arguments for the Public were in these lines. He argued for setting the bases of a "a society in which the ever-expanding and intricately ramifying consequences of associated activities shall be known in the full sense of that word, so that an organized, articulate Public comes into being" (Dewey, 1927: 184).

The study of the PPDM cannot leave aside the learning aspect as a part of its constitutive goals and as a circumstance happening in it. The learning dimension can be of crucial importance since it also articulates various central processes of decision making. In diverse studies centered on PPDM the learning dimension is commonly treated as a secondary, in many occasions partly overlooking its significance for the PPDM (e.g. Franke & Isaac: 2001). To bring the learning dimension to the study of the PPDM means to bring into question the self-sustaining aspect of the process and how knowledge is created inside the process. The political decisions depend considerably on the knowledge base, hence the importance of the learning dimension and how the theories on knowledge can contribute for interpreting this in more complex manner.

4.2 Discourses

The discourses influencing the PPDM are another aspect that the knowledge dimension can help us understand inside the participatory processes. As we reviewed the ‘discourse’ became a subject of study in social processes after Foucault. The discourse makes reference to an articulation of sentences that delimits certain conditions of existence, demarcating a certain order of thought and action (Foucault, 1980). The discourses on the PPDM are crucial as they become the medium through which the knowledge may be shared, and at the same time it represents the space where the premises for collective action are to be fixed. John Dryzek has commented “discourses are a matter of practice as well as words, for actions in the social realm are always accompanied by language that establishes the meaning of action” (2006: 4).

The PPDM supposes contesting interpretations of reality, and the struggle for fixing a common one on which to decide. In the PPDM the contestation between forms of knowledge happens in the realm of the discourse. Also in the order of the discourse the elements of reality are included or excluded and organized in specific forms. The discourses become relevant to address in PPDM as in them is possible to visualize the premises on which decisions and social arrangements happen, also it is possible to envisage the rationality on which certain arguments or forms of knowledge are accepted or rejected.

The discourses can be addressed in many levels and on different forms. There are diverse examples on which discourses have been addressed in social settings (see Jorgensen & Philips, 2002; Steenbergen et al. 2003). In the context of participatory settings John Dryzek (2012) has insisted on the need of addressing the discourses as a form of including the different versions of reality that can be encountered in a community¹⁸. He argues that “discourses cannot be governed, but they can be engaged” (Dryzek, 2006: 155).

The discourses in the context PPDM can be useful to account for several processes happening inside it. It is in the discourse itself that we can account for the different types of knowledge that are interplaying in the participatory process. As Foucault has stated, “each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true” (1980: 131); hence, it becomes relevant to make obvious in the PPDM, or attempt to interpret, what type of discourses are deemed as true and what consequences this may have for the participatory process.

¹⁸ As community can be understand from small scale community to the global community.

4.3 Inclusion/Exclusion

Finally the third aspect in which knowledge help us apprise the PPDM is the 'inclusion and exclusion processes". By the inclusion/exclusion process I refer to the participation process itself: who is effectively participating, and how different knowledges are accepted or rejected.

Ideally the participatory processes should remain open for the participation of an array of knowledges, or discourses, seeking for the 'best argument' (Habermas, 1984). Nevertheless, in reality, the social processes show in one way or another forms of exclusion. The decision process itself supposes selecting among certain interpretations and necessarily excluding others. Mouffe's agonistic approach to democracy shows that exclusions are unavoidable as power is present in all human relations: "the agonistic approach does not pretend to encompass all differences and to overcome all forms of exclusions. But exclusions are envisaged in political and not in moral terms" (Mouffe, 2005: 120). In this sense she argues that in the collectivity, the participants defend their own perspectives as part of their form of life, and any choice should be considered as a contingent political decision rather than to defend it as a universal unequivocal best choice. Hence, what is considered "legitimate and illegitimate in relation to rationality and morality,[...] is always a political decision, and should therefore always remain open to contestation" (Mouffe, 2005: 217). The PPDM may aim to open the space for contestation, nevertheless exclusions are unavoidable. Thereafter, it is of great importance making obvious the inclusion/exclusion process and reflect on the exclusions as they may become implicit or hidden in the participatory setting.

Foucault's perspectives on knowledge are useful for interpreting the inclusion/exclusion processes, distinguishing different forms of knowledges and their roles. On one hand, as we have seen, he brought to the picture the subjugated knowledges on which he gives importance of other forms of knowing and discourses which can be excluded for diverse reasons, among others for being deemed as irrational, different or unscientific (Foucault, 1980). In the other hand Foucault also pointed to the privileged knowledges or discourses, which influenced importantly on the conformation of what he named the 'regime of truth'. In this sense, inside the PPDM those individuals that effectively participate in the process shape the process in one way or another; their 'form of life' becomes the base for determining the criteria for validating other knowledges. Foucault has put it in the following way: "it's the person occupying a specific position-but whose specificity is linked,[...]in a society like ours, to the general functioning of an apparatus of truth" (Foucault, 1980: 132).

Foucault's perspectives sets the base for interpreting who is effectively participating, determining to some degree what form of knowledge is valid and which is not. From this perspective when it is being used the expression 'forms of knowledges' it is referred to all different forms of discourse drawn from form different forms of knowing. In this sense scientific knowledge is not considered 'the' knowledge but 'one' type of knowledge among others that can be found in the community.

The inclusion/exclusion process can be observed at diverse moments of the PPDM. Two spaces where this could be observed are in the structure, or setting, of the decision, and through the discourses. In the participation setting or structure it is possible to revise the spaces for participating, who and how is allowed to participate, and conversely who is excluded. Secondly, by analyzing the discourses of the participants and non-participants it is possible to observe which forms of knowledges may be excluded. Nevertheless the inclusion/exclusion process could be observed in diverse social relations.

There are diverse ways on which the inclusion/exclusion process can be addressed departing from the theories reviewed. And this will rely on the interpretative effort of the researcher. The inclusion/exclusion process becomes relevant to assess as a way on which the PPDM improves its inclusion process, its knowledge base as well as its self-sustaining feature.

4.4 The study of the PPDM from a knowledge perspective

So far I have suggested three aspects that the knowledge dimension may help us to understand in the PPDM: the learning dimension, the discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process. I have also tried to show why each of the aspects revised is central for apprising the PPDM. At this point it might be relevant to recognize that these three levels in actual cases are closely interrelated and they are simultaneously happening, and it is by untying them to some degree that it becomes easier to interpret them. In the following chapter I will provide an example of how it is possible to deal with these three aspects in an actual PPDM. The study of these dimensions can vary considerably considering the approach and characteristics of the study, its goals, its resources, the background of the researcher and so forth.

It is relevant to recall at this point that the object of accounting for the mentioned aspects is to contribute for interpreting the participatory processes of decision making; Hence, to contribute for understanding the dynamics happening in these processes.

The following table (figure 2.) presents as a mode of summary some features of the reviewed in this chapter in relation to the aspects in the PPDM that the knowledge dimension helps to understand.

Dimension	Explanation	Related questions	Sustaining theories	
			On Democracy	On Knowledge
<i>Learning</i>	Makes reference to the interactions and circumstances on which the citizens build their knowledge about the issues in question and about the community and its context.	How/Where the participants build their knowledge about the community?	-Participatory Dem. (Rousseau, J.S.Mill, Barber, Pateman) -Deliberative Dem. (Fishkin, Gutman & Thompson)	Constructivists (Piaget, Glasserfeld) -J. Dewey
<i>Discourses</i>	Makes reference to those discourses that shape the participatory process, and the role of those participating in the decisions .A discourse is an articulation of sentences that delimits certain conditions of existence.	-What discourses are interplaying? -What discourses are dominant?	-Dryzek: discursive democracy	-Foucault: knowledge as discourse, 'regimes of truth'
<i>Inclusion/ Exclusion</i>	I refer to the participation process itself: who is effectively participating, and how different knowledges are accepted or rejected.	-Who is deciding? -What sectors are excluded? -What knowledges are excluded?	-Participatory Democracy (Barber, Pateman) -Radical democracy (Habermas, Mouffe)	-Foucault: dominant knowledges and subjugated knowledges

Figure 2. Summary of aspects that the knowledge dimension can help to apprise inside Participatory Processes of Decision Making

Chapter 5

The example of Participatory Budgeting in Dondo, Mozambique

This final chapter presents a section of a study done in relation to an example of PPDM, the Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Dondo, Mozambique. This chapter tries to address the third sub-question of the text: “How does the ‘knowledge dimension’ contribute to address and interpret an actual PPDM case?” Dondo’s PB example is presented as a mode of illustrating an alternative for addressing the aspects presented on the previous chapter: learning, discourses and inclusion/exclusion.

The objective of the research was to analyze the Participatory Budgeting case of Dondo from a knowledge perspective, trying to formulate an alternative interpretation of the PPDM. The outcome expected from this research is on one hand, to display the complexity and the different relations between the aspects that integrate this participatory budgeting example; and on the other hand, to create an interpretation that dialogues with the theory, that could allow us to reflect about the process from a knowledge perspective. The example presented in this chapter only displays a relatively small sample of the whole research. The example is presented as a narrative on which the sections displayed the data is in dialogue with the theory in an interpretative manner.

5.1 Introducing the democratization process in Mozambique

Africa’s ‘third wave’ of democratization in the last decades has advanced asymmetrically throughout the continent (Diamond & Plattner, 1999: xxv). While there are regions with a clear tendency towards democracy, “patronage, corruption, neopatrimonialism, and other ‘unprogressive’ aspects of African politics persist” (Gyima-Boadi, 2004: 3). One of the countries that has made some considerable democratic advances in last 20 years has been Mozambique. This country has been one of the poorest of the world, partially explained by a war situation that lasted 26 years with a few spells of pacification. It was until 1992 when the peace agreements of the civil war were signed that Mozambique saw some tranquility (Mazula, 2004: 186). It was also through these peace agreements that Mozambique opened the door for greater democratization. Before this time the Portuguese claimed democracy, however their form of democracy excluded the great majority from this process

(Ibid: 187). Equally the ruling party after independence (FRELIMO) claimed democracy but with null participation: “party leaders and government officials claimed to speak on behalf of the people and claimed that their actions were legitimate because they represented the will of the people” (Mazula, 2004: 191). Only after 1992 the civil society was entitled with rights to associate and that mass communication sources multiplied (from initial 3 newspapers, one radio station and two government television channels) (Gyimah-Boady, 2004). Thereafter we can only talk of 20 years of democratic tradition on Mozambique; thus, the relevance of local efforts of opening the space for citizen involvement on a context with a poor democratic tradition, such as is the participatory budgeting in Dondo.

5.2 Background on the Participatory Budgeting

The ‘participatory budgeting’ has been a participatory process of decision making that started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989. This first example of participatory budgeting basically consisted of the creation of a participatory setting by opening the space to the participation of the population, -by spaces debate and consultation-, in which, the participating population would determine where to spend a large percentage of the budget of the government. This initial participatory setting meant among others considerable improvements in education and health (a common interest for most of the participants) and as well improving the tax revenue (Neaera, 2000). After this example, the participatory budgeting has expanded to over a thousand municipalities in all continents (World Watch Institute, 2007: 180). The Municipal Government of Dondo, Mozambique attributed itself to have created a similar process after 1999, what invited me to study the participatory setting from a knowledge perspective. After making this study, I concluded it had very little in similar to the first example of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre. However the case is still a pioneer in its context, and within its limited success from a ‘development’ perspective, or from the predominant international organization’s criteria, it still opened towards a rich variety of circumstances, and it can be a valuable example of participatory process of decision making.

5.3 Methodological remarks on the fieldwork

As the rest of the study, the fieldwork followed an interpretive methodology; however its grounding, due the characteristic of study task, relied on qualitative approaches closer to the ethnographic methods. The fieldwork tried to pursue the people, the circumstances and documents associated to what I sought for: the

participatory budgeting in Dondo in relation to certain approaches related to knowledge.

As in much fieldworks, one of its outcomes is 'describing parts of the world unknown to others' (Peter, 1987), hence again the role of interpretation and translation. The format of the research shares some features with co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996; Pearce; 2008). In co-operative enquiry the researcher engages with other human beings in a cooperative and creative process on which supposes a continuous movement between experience and reflection (Heron, 1996:4f). In this sense my research was not greatly structured in its beginning, as I was aiming to searching for intersections between knowledge and participation; hence in a way it followed another premise of co-operative inquiry: 'making progress by being lost'(Molano in Pearce 2008: 37).

The approach of the study, it may be assumed that was mostly deductive since I have already approached from some theory. However, as in most studies, both operations of deduction and induction are required. In this case various elements of the theory are put to test or exploration and at the same time are brought aspects observed from the field study.

The researched used 'mixed-method' or 'multiple methods'¹⁹, which according to Yanow and Schwartz-Shea have gained ground in diverse disciplines (2012: 132f). While mostly qualitative, a variety of methods were used, typically following fieldwork procedures (field notes, diary, transparency in encounters, and so forth). The methods mostly used were: unstructured interviews (or 'walking talks'), participant observation and in lesser degree semi-structured interviews; I also worked on one focus group. I approached to a variety of citizens, neighborhood leaders, NGO actors, and governmental officials. I also sought and incorporated governmental documents, and the little already existing research on the topic. Some of the methods I found useful for the collection of data were related to Chamber's Participatory Rural Appraisal (1994), on which in the absence of general data, I used estimations of the population and contrasted with others estimations to get a certain picture of the situation in the community. Most of the results presented are drawn from the discourses of the participants.

As we may know the symbols that one presents in the society give us access to some aspects of social life and limits our access to others; opening and closing to us certain worlds. This becomes particularly obvious in fieldwork when by the 'subjection of the self', we enter, in our whole, into the circle of response of others (Goffman 1974: 154). I as a 'white' man with rare features and a strong spanish accent in Portuguese (or 'portuñol'), stood out considerably in Dondo. In general I

¹⁹ Elinor Ostrom has proposed in numerous occasions the use of 'multiple methods' (in Yanow and Schwartz -Shea, 134)

observed an outstanding disposition to attend me, however having such a charged foreign figure, I could have evoked touching upon some themes and avoiding others, especially inside the government. In this sense, this could have been a limitation of my research, although this is something I tried to account for.

5.4 Comments about the research design.

The research is presented trying to display briefly an alternative of using the three aspects on which is suggested that knowledge contributes for understanding the PPDM (learning, discourses and inclusion/exclusion). The narrative presented tries to show how the three processes are interrelated and are simultaneous. The results of the research are complemented with theories that contribute for interpreting the circumstances found on the field. As the reader may infer, each of the aspects presented could be explored in greater detail in an actual example, as in each of the aspects lies great complexity and these could be interpreted in a variety of manners. Hence, due the characteristics of the text, only some alternatives for addressing the mentioned aspects are explored, as a mode of exemplifying the argument of this paper and some of its possibilities.

5.5 About Dondo

The municipality of Dondo in the Beira corridor on the center-south east of Mozambique, is a mainly urban center (90%), with a stable population of around 70 817 according to the 2007 census (Municipality of Dondo, 2012). Since its formation in 1920's a few industries settled in the territory driving to the formation of other services; driving to the creation of a population more distanced from subsistence agriculture, still the predominant in Mozambique. The city itself has only a few paved streets and the rest of the city is composed of over a hundred kilometers of tiny dirt roads in between bushes and mostly edible plants and food trees. The unemployment rate in Dondo accounts for 25.7% of the population and the rate of HIV/Aids is of 30% among other pressing health issues (Ibid.). The access to water and other services such as health and education has increased considerably in the community for the last 10 years, in now a peaceful setting after the Civil War in Mozambique. Some of the improvements in the community are associated the participatory budgeting process and to the role of the actual government that has been in rule since 1999.

5.6 The Structure of the Participatory Budgeting

The participatory budgeting in Dondo in the years after 2007 (changing since 1999 its way of functioning), seems to have more elements of deliberative democracy with the inclusion or participation of some discourses (as in Dryzek, 2006), rather than direct democracy, as the participation of the citizens is restricted to considerably limited spaces.

In the structure of the government and of the participatory budgeting there could be found mainly two spaces for the inclusion of general population in the process of deciding the budget. Firstly the ‘Consultative Forums’ (Fóruns Consultivos) having two each year; the municipal council invites representatives of different sectors NGOs, churches, leaders, business and others (and these can suggest inviting others), to revise the projects to be included in the budget of each year and the execution of the budget of the previous year. In these ‘Consultative Forums’ is when the different viewpoints can have a say with relative freedom, however they have to deal mostly with already formulated alternatives of projects to be included on the budget. Nevertheless, the participants of the Forums can’t decide over the budget, they are just selecting and organizing the proposals before the ‘Municipal Assembly’ (Assembleia Municipal, selected in elections), decides the projects and the budget.

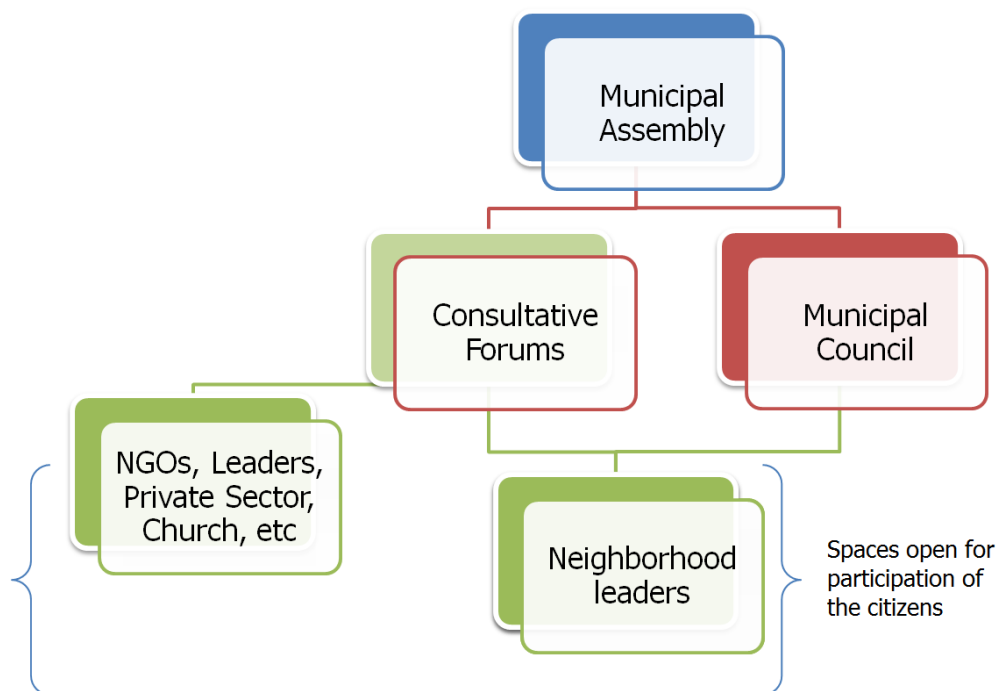


Figure 3. Decision hierarchy of the government and spaces for the participation of the citizens in the case of Participatory Budgeting in Dondo, Mozambique

Secondly, the participatory budgeting does not open the space to all citizens for their direct involvement; it rather has a hierarchical structure of participation starting from 10 houses, ‘block’ (quarteirão), units (consisting of around 8 to 12 blocks), and the neighborhood (a number of ‘units’ depending of the size of each of the 10 neighborhoods in Dondo); each level has a leader assigned by the immediate level above, and represents the population in those spaces. In these levels the population can directly participate, bringing issues and giving opinions, but mostly this happens in individual basis; the citizens do not access to the budget nor engage with other citizens for deciding directly about other matters, with the exception of certain planning processes of the urban physical space that involves-affects them directly. However, the ‘neighborhood leaders’, which receive an honorary remuneration (or a partial salary), bring directly to the government in weekly basis information of their neighborhood, suggesting what to attend, and together with sectors of the government, they formulate projects to be sent to the ‘Consultative Forums’ and the ‘Municipal Assembly’. Each neighborhood and each sub-unit has periodical meetings (once or twice a month) to discuss the issues in their territory of concern. The structure of representation is presented in the next Figure (4).

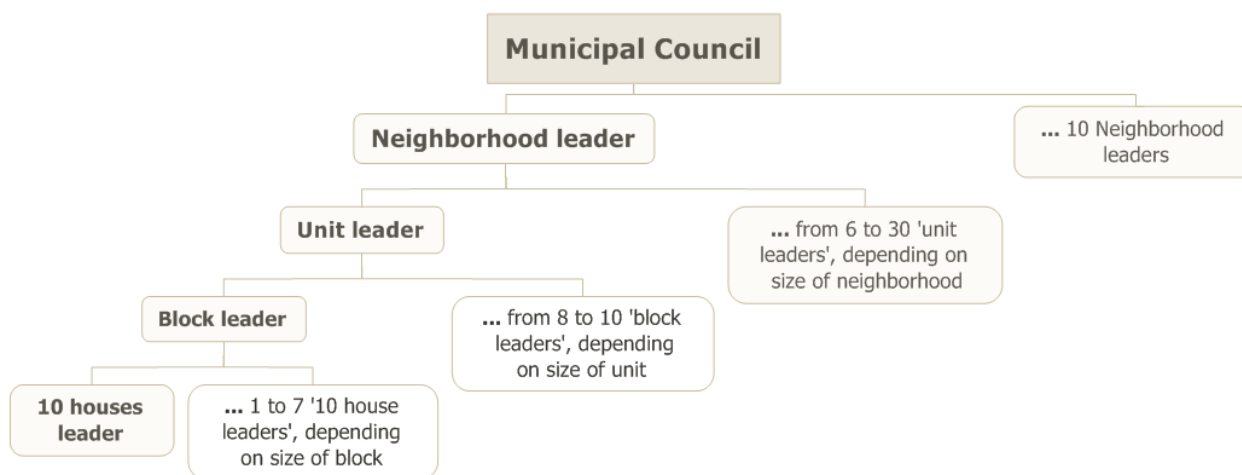


Figure 4. Hierarchy of representatives, representing the different levels where citizens may participate in the Participatory Budgeting in Dondo (by 2012)

Even if Dondo is not a heavily populated urban center, the amount of people participating is limited. The structure of the participatory example of Dondo, Mozambique, having a considerable representative structure, does not contradict Robert Dahl’s law of time and numbers in which. “The more citizens a democratic unit contains, the less that citizens can participate directly in government decisions

and the more that they must delegate authority to others” (Dahl, 2000: 109). The amount of participants is not a clear number that can be obtained in the government, but according to Anselmo Figueroa, one of the initiators of the Participatory Budgeting in Dondo and currently a member of the Municipal Council, 10% of the population participates somehow in the decision process (2012).

5. 7 The Learning dimension

The first aspect to be revised in the example of Dondo is in relation to the learning dimension. How the citizens learn about the decisions and about the community is a complex communication process that can be approached in different ways. For the purpose of this study, firstly, I studied how the participants build their knowledge about the community and its problems by comparing the participants’ knowledge (discourse) about the community by their degree of involvement in the participatory process. And as a secondly, I revised how the participants perceived this learning process.

5.7.1 Learning Dimension: the knowledge about the community

By analyzing the speech of individuals involved in the participatory process in relation to the problems of the community, one could interpret that their knowledge depends on great degree on their role or participation in the decision process. Depending on the position of the participant (citizen or government official) their knowledge (discourse) of the community would appear to have certain characteristics. In this example I interpreted a series of interviews and discourses in relation to the participant’s appreciation of the problems of the community, done as a specific question in the interviews or talks.

For instance the discourse of a member of NGO’s treating AIDS was detailed in relation to the topic he was treating, but he would not know how the neighbourhoods are organized. Similarly those occupying positions where they would filter a great deal of information such as the ‘Neighbourhood leaders’, would have a very extensive knowledge about their area of the city and the problems found in it. In this sense, those who filtered greater amounts of information such as some members of the Municipal Council and the Neighbourhood leaders would show to have a most extensive picture of the problems of the community. When this was compared to the lay citizens who barely participated their knowledge, while clearly heterogeneous, wouldn’t show the same detail that the ones participating actively on the process.

Indeed, none of the lay citizen interviewees (12) knew how they could participate in the decision process and their perspectives of the problems would be either immediate or relatively general.

The fact that the ones participating have a more detailed knowledge (discourse) of the community and its problems than the lay citizen might seem obvious. However this example supports one central thesis of the arguments for more participatory forms of democracy on which the citizens learn about the community by participating.

For the involved citizens, their pragmatic motive made them face specific situations that made them learn about the community. From a constructivist perspective, we could say that their situation in the structure made them face some situations or ‘perturbation’, allowing the cognitive change, opening to them about certain world of relations, hence, creating knowledge about the process of decisions and the community. In another context Berger and Luckmann have posed:

“my consciousness is dominated by the pragmatic motive, that is, my attention to this world is mainly determined by what I am doing, have done or plan to do in it”
(Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 36)

The government in Dondo, in their participatory decision setting, allowed certain members of the community to participate in some level. In each level of participation they would face certain aspects that seemed relevant to consider or to learn about. However, only a section of knowledge could be available to the participants, i.e. the knowledge that the ‘Block Leader’ would have of the community necessarily would be different to that of the Assembly member. Hence, the knowledge also depended on the situation, in the pragmatic motive that each actor had to play in the structure.

Hence this aspect strengthens the argument of both deliberative and participatory democracy on which the citizens become knowledgeable by participating. In the same way it supports John Dewey’s view that the citizens only by their involvement in decisions may learn the necessary, to be able to build with other knowledgeable citizens a common ‘route’ (1927).

5.7.2 Learning dimension: the views on learning of the community

The second aspect in relation to the learning dimension that was investigated was in relation to how the individuals participating conceived the learning process, or more

specifically, their perspectives on how the fellow citizens may learn about the community and its issues.

On a first instance much of the interviewees when they questioned about learning about the community, they was commonly associated it to learning in school. But as it was explained further what kind of learning I was trying to refer to; they started pointing to other processes such as the experience, social relations and training. However there was no clear association between the role or participation in the decision process and what they could learn about the community.

A common trait in the interviews was the consideration that the population in general or lay citizens had very little knowledge for making decisions or for contributing in a positive way for them; this view came not only from government officials but from lay citizens as well. Subsequently it could be interpreted that this form of government required other knowledge than the one available in the everyday's lives of the population. It was implicit that in order to function well, this form of government required some knowledge that was not present in the community itself. This for instance could also be seen in relation to schooling as much government officials, NGOs and members of organizations involved had in most cases a higher level of education than the average citizens. Also it was common that the members of the Municipal Assembly wouldn't be people born from in Dondo, but coming from the main urban centers in Mozambique. In this sense it could be interpreted that the knowledge required for the decisions would be more adequate if it was learned elsewhere, deeming that this knowledge was not present in the everyday interactions of the citizens.

Ivan Illich in one of his last writings in education, brought to consideration the belief of *scarcity* of learning or knowledge (Illich, 1995: v). Education somehow is based on this belief that learning is scarce, upon which we had to do special arrangements to acquire that required knowledge (Ibid.). In the case of Dondo, this belief of scarcity of the knowledge for participating in the decisions was a common observable perspective. And as it is to be expected, education was seen as way to deal with it.

In a attended weekly meeting with the Neighbourhood Leaders, the structure of the meeting seemed to be considerably hierarchical, on which the General Secretary of the Municipal Council would tell the leaders what to do and in which way. He would be 'hard' on them, but then he would also reassure them, with many similarities to the functioning of a traditional school.

Also the Government commonly provides training to some of the 'higher' hierarchy levels associated to decisions, especially government officials, NGOs and Neighborhood Leaders. It might be undeniable that this formation situations could

have helped to line up the participants for achieving the desired improved administration. Nevertheless it might be relevant as well to consider that that new knowledge could create a new disposition towards the previous available knowledge; creating a distance from the local or available knowledge, which might remain unexplored or could be simply deemed invaluable, even if it may be the closest. In this sense, the idea of participation itself is not endemic either; it is part of what should be learned from elsewhere.

The analysis of the learning process showed that participation process itself was not perceived as a distinctive space in which learning about the political happened. They were rather associated other spaces for learning, insisting in some way on the scarcity of knowledge in the community. This issue is not unique of this case of PB; these views are very common in many democratic societies, considering schooling and other spaces as the main circumstances for learning about the political rather than in the process itself.

5.8 Discourses

For studying the discourses there is a great array of issues and perspectives that can be addressed since much of the human interactions happen inside linguistic communication. As we have seen the functioning of the government and the political decisions depend on how certain premises are fixed. For this text I decided to focus on the discourses related to the rationality of the government related to the need of including the lay citizens in the decision making processes, or simply put, the discourses of the government officials about why is considered necessary to involve the citizens in the decisions. This focus permits to observe the articulation sentences that create a 'truth' image on which the participatory budgeting process should happen and what is behind. The objective of analyzing the discourse as Laclau and Mouffe have seen is "not to uncover the objective reality,[...], but to explore *how we* create this reality so that it appears objective and natural" (in Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 36).

Firstly in the higher levels of the government, for instance in the discourse of the Municipal President of Dondo in relation to the involvement the citizens (since 1999 till today) we can identify two main drivers behind it, for economic efficiency and for deeming the citizens as agents. We can see his writing in relation to the importance of involving the population in decisions of the government (Cambezo, 2008: 70):

"It improves efficiency and efficacy in the use of public resources [...]"

Citizens should always be part of the decision-making process because they plan an active role in municipal development and are responsible for the success of development projects”

Hence we can distinguish at this point these two rationalities: efficiency and citizens as agents. But when we move lower in the hierarchy of the government the discourse starts changing to be more operative, hence the perception of the need of involving the citizens changes as well. The next level of officers of the government insist that the involvement of the citizens has the objective of making more effective the decisions of the government, but their perception of the citizens is not anymore of agency but of passive members who should cooperate with the projects of the government. For instance on an interview with a member of the Municipal Council he said (own interview, march 2012):

“The citizens can be connected to us by the community leaders [...] but mainly their role [community leaders] is to direct their community and help us gain support of the citizens for those projects that the government plans to do”

Hence from this interview we can see that the importance of involving the citizens in the decisions has degraded from agency to support. Furthermore, moving down in the hierarchy of participants in the government, the neighborhood leaders perception’s of involving the citizens, moved away completely from agency towards the need of compelling the citizens for cooperating with the government. In words of a neighborhood leader (own interview, march 2012):

“the citizens can come to their corresponding leader when they have a problem[...] but they are here to obey us, we have to make ourselves respect”

The perception of some of the neighborhood leaders seems closer to what a great percentage of the general population considers about the role of the government. For instance it is possible to see that in the Afrobarometer 61% of the Mozambicans agreed that: “People are like children; government should take care of them like a parent” (Shenga & Pereira, 2008: 10).

On this example we could see how the perception of the involvement citizens by the officers in Dondo moved considerably depending on the hierarchy, adapting the discourse to the immediate circumstances. This approach to the discourses allows detecting a certain inconsistency between the different perceptions and rationalities, also helping to explaining the behaviors of the actors at each level. This can also provide us some hints about how the PB is really functioning and the rationality of the actors participating.

The political action depends on the interpretations that are deemed as truth. In this example we reviewed the actor's interpretation in relation to the need of involving other citizens; by analyzing the discourses we can contrast between these interpretations. The possibility of contrasting between interpretations or discourses could support Dryzek's view on Deliberative Democracy on which it is possible to address diverse discourses that can be found in society.

To interpret the discourse as in this example may disclose central aspects about how premises about reality are fixed and how the actors understand their own roles and action.

5.9 Inclusion/Exclusion process

The final aspect that was explored is the inclusion/exclusion process. Returning to this aspect, we can recall Foucault's (1980) perspectives helping us to distinguish between different types of knowledges, among others those that dominate and those that were 'subjugated'. In the case of Dondo, for trying to interpret how these knowledges were included or excluded, it was decided to study briefly who is participating in the process and hence who could be excluded. This was done through participant observation and the revision of official documents. Nevertheless it is worth mentioning that the inclusion/exclusion process can be appraised in many levels, such as in the social interactions, in the discourses or in the culture sphere.

In Dondo, the characteristics of the individuals participating in the decisions varied, depending on the level of participation. In the formal government we could find that there were a majority of men, with an average of 1 woman per 5 workers (Municipio do Dondo, 2012). However the higher you would go in the government the more women that would be found, as in the 'Municipal Assembly' there were 8 women out of 20 members. The opposite applied to the lower levels, the further down you went in the hierarchy the fewer women. In the case of 'Neighborhood Leaders' and the leaders in the levels under them ('Unit', 'Blocks', '10 houses'), it would be very rare to see a woman occupying one of those roles. Equally in the community gatherings related to political decisions it was always a great majority of men. Thus we can talk of a structure considerably dominated by men.

The 'neighborhood leaders' are a crucial figure for the inclusion of the population in the neighborhood as they are the last citizen knowledge 'filter' before the formal government. All the neighborhood leaders are men and they all belong to the linguistic and 'ethnic' group of the Senas (a mix between Machangas, Matewe and Sena-Podzo from the lower Zambezi [Municipio do Dondo, 2012]). 'Senas' are the majority in Dondo, however there is around a 20 to 30% of a different group called

‘Dau’ or ‘Ndau’²⁰. Between themselves the groups attribute a range of attributes to each others; however, there are no apparent sizable conflicts within the groups²¹. Nonetheless the Senas have a clear dominance over the public matters as the whole representative apparatus below the Neighborhood Leaders is mostly integrated by Sena speaking men.

Here I am only using two very obvious characteristics to distinguish those participating in the PB, which may tell us about the positionality of the participants and the situatedness of their knowledge (Harding, 2008). To these we could also add to this other characteristics, such as, the privileged role ‘schooled’ population has in the decisions among others. And agglomerating these aspects we can start getting an idea of what sort of people, hence ‘knowledges’, are better accepted for participating in the decisions. To get a clearer picture for instance it could be contrasted how the knowledge of a unschooled Ndau woman would compete with a schooled Sena male. Nevertheless, the deeper the analysis goes into the discourses, interactions and cultural features; the better possibilities to interpret in detail which could be the privileged and subjugated ‘knowledges’ and their intricacies. For this example only the presented variables are considered.

As I have commented to identify the inclusion/exclusion process is of crucial importance in order to assess and improve the PPDM, if it is aiming to build a more inclusive process. As we saw from the variables revised, Dondo presents a situation of exclusion of certain social groups; however, when the citizens were questioned about this situation of exclusion they would have a general reaction of normality, implying that this is how it has always been, similar to the concept of ‘illusio’ for Bourdieu (1991), on which for the players of a game the features of the game are incorporated and deemed as normal. That social order had become their standpoint, and from a social systems perspectives it is difficult to know how these social establishments are related to other arrangements in society; therefore it is difficult to predict what could actually change if this order is decided to be modified. Nevertheless it is by identifying these situations and interpreting them that it is possible to assess the process.

²⁰ There is no government measurement for Ethnic groups, but I asked to the population to do their own calculation and after I calculated that average. Similar to some measurement methods in Participatory Rural Appraisal, measuring by difference rather than by absolutes (e.g. Chalmers, 1994)

²¹ After the independence in Mozambique there was a high emphasis of the government to establish the Portuguese as the main language, among others to reduce differences among groups (Mazula, 2004).

5.10 Final remarks on the Participatory Budgeting example in Dondo

The Participatory Budgeting in Dondo has been a pioneer both in Mozambique and in Africa even though there are still many problems to tackle before it accomplishes the success of other examples of Participatory Budgeting. The Participatory Budgeting in Dondo with its achievements and problems provides a rich case for exemplifying how the relevance of the ‘knowledge dimension’ for addressing and interpreting the PPDM. Thus through this example is of use for responding the third sub-question of this paper. Due the argument in the text other conclusions and some alternatives to the PB example are omitted.

The three aspects that we addressed, learning, discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process contribute for interpreting the PPDM in different manners. Each aspect opens towards different features of the participatory process, driving to take into account different facets. However, as I mentioned before, the three processes are interrelated, and these relations perhaps shouldn’t be disregarded; as for instance the discourses can be necessary to understand some aspects of the inclusion/exclusion process, and also it is through the inclusion/exclusion process that we may know who and how is learning about the community, among others.

To approach the Participatory Budgeting in Dondo in this ‘knowledge’ lens can contribute for interpreting some dimensions of the complexity of the participatory processes, hence to enhance our understanding of these.

Conclusions

The need of more participatory forms of democracy requires models accounting in a better way what happens inside the processes of decision making. While many studies have focused on theorizing normatively or accounting for cases, lesser research has been dedicated to epistemological concerns on how can we apprehend the complexity that is in stake inside participatory processes of decision making. This study has tried to contribute in this latter research effort.

This text has tried to address ‘how can the knowledge dimension enhance our understanding of the participatory processes of decision making?’ The answer may not have ‘one’ definitive answer since ‘knowledge’ is a polysemic term pointing towards diverse complex matters embracing much of the human occurrence. Nevertheless, throughout this text, diverse arguments were brought forth trying to show how diverse perspectives on knowledge may contribute to build a solid standpoint to apprise the Participatory Processes of Decision Making (PPDM).

In this sense the proposed approach to knowledge may help disclosing certain dimensions in the PPDM, contributing to interpret them, and hence, to assess them. Thereafter while the approach remains considerably theoretical, it can also have a more pragmatic use.

The three aspects that this text proposes that the knowledge dimension contributes to understand in the PPDM - the learning dimension, the discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process- , are of central importance for interpreting the participatory processes; but at the same time these aspects contribute for the theoretical discussion on the underlying premises for more participatory forms of democracy.

Some of the theoretical contributions of the paper have been to bridge the theory on knowledge and the theory on democracy and participation; suggesting that the theory on knowledge can add to discussion on diverse issues in democratic theory. Among others, the theory on knowledge (Berger and Luckman[1967]; Glasserfeld[1996]; Piaget[1977]) clearly supports the argument of much of the democratic theorists in relation to the relevance of the pragmatic involvement of the citizens on the decision process for learning about the decisions and the community, and by this, that the decisions may become self-sustaining.

Another contribution of the text can be seen in relation to bring considerably abstract conceptions in the theory on knowledge, into a more pragmatic use in the context of PPDM. Perhaps the most significant example is in relation to Foucault, whose

perspectives are in many occasions considerably open for interpretation. In this text I tried to show the importance of attempting to identify the subjugated knowledges for identifying the exclusions. Also a more conventional use of the discourse was proposed for identifying the interpretations and rationalities used by the actors involved in the decisions.

The relation between theories on knowledge and democracy can prove fruitful to bring understanding to participatory processes. As I mentioned, the possibilities within these is far from being exhausted in the text. In this sense, it is hoped that the approaches proposed can be more inviting for pondering these relations, rather than constraining into one approach.

The Participatory Budgeting example in Dondo, provides copious evidence of the complexity on which the PPDM are immersed, as well of the need of reflecting on these processes in order to improve them. The knowledge aspects that were explored provided a particular view of the process, which can contribute to re-consider the form of associating the variables normally observed in the processes, inviting for new interpretations.

The analysis of the 3 aspects in the example of Dondo(learning, discourses and inclusion/exclusion) provides support for some of the theoretical perspectives reviewed. Among others, it supports the mentioned argument in relation to ‘learning by participating’ held by participatory democracy and knowledge theorists; and Dryzek’s(2012) argument on the possibility of addressing the discourses to account for different versions of reality.

Participatory processes of decision making can create peerless opportunities for our communities to reflect and deliberate about our conditions of living, and hence to deliberate, reflect and decide about the conditions on which the world is being opened after us. If it is aimed to create settings for the creation of knowledgeable and capable citizens that are able to decide complex issues, it is necessary not only of political will, but of greater reflection on the complexity on which the decision processes is immersed, and subsequently the possibilities for building enhanced models for participation and cooperation.

Executive Summary

In recent years great possibilities have been opened for the establishment of decision settings for deliberation and direct involvement of the population. However, there is still a need of appraising the complexity on which these participatory settings of decision making are immersed in. In this context, this text tries to reflect upon *how can the knowledge dimension enhance our understanding of the Participatory Processes of Decision Making (PPDM)?* In this sense the text is eminently theoretical on which diverse theories on participatory forms of democracy are put in dialogue and complemented by selected theories on knowledge. The text suggests 3 aspects that the knowledge dimension can help to understand inside the PPDM: the *learning dimension, the discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process*. The argument of the text is complemented and exemplified by a PPDM example: the Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Dondo, Mozambique.

In relation to the methodology my research was done from an ‘interpretative’ perspective (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012). The first part of the thesis remains considerably theoretical. The revision of the texts, or the literature review, was made upon certain hermeneutic considerations (mainly from Gadamer, 1976; Ricoeur, 1975). In these the interpretation is seen as a dialogical process between our ‘horizon’ of interpretation – what is opened by our situated position (language, culture, history, context, etc.)- and the ‘horizon’ of the object of study (1976). Also, interpretation is considered as a process of continuous creation of meaning, something that “no single version closes” (Ricoeur, 1975: 91). Also the paper was done from an interdisciplinary perspective trying to bring together perspectives that have remained parceled, especially in relation to the matter of ‘knowledge’ that has been researched in a wide range of disciplines.

In the first part of the text I make a revision of some political theory from where participation has emerged. I start by seeing the political as the space of contestation on how we fix the premises upon which we base our collectivity. Then it enters the the discussion on democracy and how it has become an increasingly ambiguous term, and at the same time almost as some kind of funding myth of our societies. In this sense, democracy cannot be seen as the ‘rational’ conclusion of some historical process, but as something that makes sense from our position in the world, something “constitutive of our form of life” (Mouffe, 2005).

Some of the theories on democracy that have defended a higher involvement of the population are ‘participatory democracy’ and ‘deliberative democracy’. Some proponents of participatory democracy have argued for deeper participation, among other reasons for: greater control over our lives, the conformation of the community,

the learning process and for the creation of a self-sustaining process of decision. Deliberative theorists, in many occasions have argued for a larger involvement of the citizens on the decisions, insisting on public deliberation, and in later versions, the engagement of discourses (Dryzek, 2010). However, participation also has had critiques. In the context of development for instance, participation hasn't been always successful, in occasions, adding difficulties to the decision process, creating waste of resources, or even used to justify or hide other undesirable situations (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

After reviewing some aspects on participation and democracy, are presented the selected theories on knowledge that can be helpful for interpreting the PPDM and are useful to build our approach. Knowledge has been central for many disciplines; therefore it has been subject of much thought. Knowledge as many other terms in language can have various meanings depending on its relation to other words (or signs); moreover the term 'knowledge' specially, can disclose to various levels of significance. Then, instead of fixing a single definition or so, we have to work with the already existing uses of the term. However for the purpose of having some guidance for the text, I used Berger and Luckmann's definition, due its simplicity; then knowledge could be seen "as the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 13). However, as we said this perspective does not exhaust its possible meanings.

Two bodies of considered theories were revised: constructivists (on knowing), and Foucault's (on power/knowledge). Firstly the constructivists are useful to discuss the *learning dimension*. Jean Piaget and Ernst von Glasersfeld, (from a background initially associated to biology) present that knowledge is constructed actively by the subject and that cognition has an adaptive function, serving for "the organization of the experiential world of the subject"(Glasersfeld, 1996: 25). Their explanation of the process of acquiring knowledge is quite detailed and could be useful for accounting how the learning process happens inside the participatory processes. Among others, this model suggests that the 'perturbations' we face in our lives, or those circumstances we encounter that somehow stand out, set the base for the cognitive change, opening a world of relations about reality. Also, how we accumulate those experiences, set the base upon how we encounter the next. The knowledge outside our experience, as in language, can be seen as 'reformulations of the experience' with elements of the experience, which as well obey to criteria of viability we have ourselves built in experience (Glasersfeld, 1996; Maturana, 2001).

The second perspective brought forth is that of Michael Foucault on 'power/knowledge'. His perspectives create a clear bridge between the theories on knowledge and the participatory process of decision making. His perspective is useful for accounting for the *discourses and the inclusion/exclusion process*. Among others his perspectives help to appraise the validation of knowledge and truth in the

social or the construction of 'regimes of truth'; and how these have deep consequences for our social organization, determining a certain social order that determines even our most intimate decisions. That is why knowledge could not be dissociated from power. For Foucault the material mean of knowledge is the discourse, on which an articulation of sentences creates certain conditions of possibility. Also, Foucault's approach distinguishes between types of knowledges (e.g. subjugated knowledges).

After revising the theories on knowledge, the following section brings into dialogue the theories on knowledge and the ones on knowledge in relation to the three aspects revised (learning dimension, discourses and inclusion/exclusion) insisting on the importance of these three for the PPDM and the need for accounting them.

The 'learning dimension' makes reference to the interactions and circumstances on which the citizens build their knowledge about the issues in question and in relation to the community. The learning aspect has been of central importance for much of the theorist on more participatory forms of democracy from Rousseau (1762) till Dryzek (2012). This argument is strengthened by the theories on knowledge among others those of constructivists, which insist that learning happens by facing 'perturbations' in our directed pragmatic action.

The 'discourses' make reference to those articulations of sentences that shape the participatory process and the role of those participating on the decisions. As the theories on democracy have insisted the political is the terrain of the fixation. It is through the discourse that can be fixed the premises about reality and the frame on which the political action should happen. The discourse became a matter of study after Foucault(1980) who described its pervasiveness in the social and individual. Later perspectives on democracy (Dryzek [2012]), have insisted on the possibility of addressing the discourses as a form of accounting of diverse perspectives found in society.

The 'inclusion/exclusion process' refers to the effective participation itself, in other words who is participating and who is excluded, hence the knowledges accepted and rejected. While the theory on democracy holds the contestation of knowledges (Habermas, 1984), in reality, the exclusions are unavoidable, hence the importance to account for this exclusions to assess the PPDM process itself. Foucault's perspectives (1980) on how the individual roles contribute to build a 'regime of truth' and to identify the 'subjugated and privileged knowledges' are useful to account for this process.

After revising the relevance of the 3 proposed aspects that 'knowledge' may contribute for understanding the PPDM, the text tries to exemplify the argument by means of an example of PPDM. The Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Dondo,

Mozambique is used as example on how these 3 aspects can be of importance to understand the participatory processes of decision making.

The PB example of Dondo flourished in Mozambique after 26 years of almost uninterrupted war, in a context of intense poverty. The first participatory budgeting (PB) started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, expanding itself to over a 1000 municipalities around the world (World Watch Institute, 2007). The example of Dondo has not followed all the principles of other participatory budgeting examples; nevertheless it is still a pioneer in the context of Africa. The research process for presenting this example was done on a fieldwork in Dondo. In relation to the methodologies, it was used an interpretative perspective, using mixed-methods and it followed diverse premises of 'co-operative enquiry' (Heron, 1996).

The PB in general consists on putting forward into the public a considerable amount of the budget of the Government in order that the population organized in different nucleus could discuss where to realize the expenditure of that resource. In the case of Dondo it didn't function in this manner. In the PB of Dondo the population could only contribute for the proposal of projects. Very few representatives of the neighborhoods and other actors of the town (NGO's, academics, etc.) would filtrate these proposals, in order that the Municipal Assembly (chosen in popular elections) would choose finally which to implement. Nevertheless, this mode of organization is said to have brought diverse improvements to the community, among others health, water and infrastructure.

The PB example of Dondo was explored in the 3 mentioned aspects on which knowledge may contribute for understanding the PPDM (learning dimension, discourses and inclusion/exclusion process); it presents some alternatives of dealing with the 3 aspects as a mode of exemplifying how these may be of use, nevertheless these are only presented as one alternative among many possible relevant forms of addressing an actual case of PPDM.

In relation to the Learning dimension the example explored 2 levels. Firstly it was researched, what kind of knowledge (or discourse) the participants would build about the community depending on their role in the participatory process. The brief analysis realized supports the argument of the theories on participatory forms of democracy, on which the knowledge of the community of the participants changes or increases by being greatly involved in the decision process.

The second matter in relation to the Learning Dimension that the example explored is about the participant's perception on how the learning process happens, or how they may build their knowledge of the problems of the community. The study concludes that the learning aspect is associated normally to formal education, leaving aside informal forms of learning such as the involvement in the decisions.

In relation to the second aspect that the knowledge dimension may contribute for understand, the discourses, the research could have done in many levels, since much of the human interactions happen in linguistic communication. However for this example one relevant matter to participation was explored: the rationality of the government officials in relation to importance of involving the citizens in the decisions. The study concludes that depending on the hierarchy of the representative in the decision structure, the discourse about the decision process and the role of the citizens would change. While in the top of the hierarchy the citizens are conceived as agents, in the bottom level they are seen as a burden for the government. These discourses may be identified and addressed inside for reflecting on the participatory process.

Finally the inclusion/exclusion process was exemplified in the case of Dondo by distinguishing some evident characteristics of the population actively involved in the decision process, hence to identify some implicit exclusions of individuals thus of knowledges. The study concludes that the privileged population or knowledges are from the linguistic group Sena and mostly men. Other features can also be considered for identifying the privileged participating groups, and hence to interpret which groups can be absent, hence which could represent 'subjugated knowledges'.

Overall the example concludes that the knowledge dimension contributes for disclosing diverse central components of this PPDM case. It is relevant as well to recognize the interrelatedness of these aspects and how they may be treated in diverse manners inside PPDM cases.

The whole text tries to contribute theoretically and on more pragmatic grounds to think the PPDM by bringing into consideration the knowledge dimension. The text provides copious examples on how the knowledge dimension may improve our understanding of the PPDM. By bringing into consideration the three suggested aspects that the knowledge dimension contributes for understating the PPDM (learning, discourses and inclusion/exclusion) it can be further interpreted, hence the variables in the participatory processes can be related in novel manners. Improving the analysis of the participatory processes, also contributes for improving the PPDM themselves. As the complexity on which the PPDM is immersed may be further interpreted and disclosed, it may also be dealt with in order to build enhanced models of participation and cooperation.

Word count executive summary: 1973

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