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Editorial

Knowledge, local actors and public action

Abstract

What is the status and role in public action of the knowledge possessed by 'simple' citizens, users and professionals? That is the question broached in both this article and the entire special issue for which it serves as the introduction. To this end, we explore the abundant scientific literature pertaining to the topic and try to situate our own position within the broader setting. After discussing the gradual questioning of the social representations that have made scientific knowledge the ideal and standard by which we measure all knowledge, we argue that many authors with an essentialist approach to knowledge have stressed the differences between scientific knowledge and non-scientific knowledge, often leaving us at an impasse. We argue therefore that it is preferable to advance an approach in which knowledge is as at once relational and in a constant process of hybridization. Having opted for and justified this position, we then focus on the – hybrid – knowledge possessed by citizens, users and professionals, by first probing the reasons for the growing involvement of these actors in the production of knowledge and policies. We then ponder the nature and foundations of the complaints and criticisms frequently levelled at participatory mechanisms as to the actual role played in these areas by the knowledge held by 'local' actors. In the end, we identify proposals defended by certain authors to make the interactions of actors from different social worlds more symmetrical.

1. Introduction

The participation of citizens, users and professionals in the development of public policy has grown steadily in recent decades. The knowledge of these actors, often referred to as local knowledge, is increasingly in demand in participatory processes, even though more often than not what actually occurs in these processes differs significantly from the rhetoric deployed to justify them. These trends are part of broader developments affecting methods of governance: public action is becoming increasingly multi-polar and iterative; it is providing greater scope for regulatory instruments, some of which regulate knowledge directly, while others regulate through knowledge.

A great deal has been written on these phenomena, and the literature fuels the progress of practices and policies (Avis, 2003; Carlile & Rebentisch, 2003). Developed primarily at the sector level, it covers many areas of public action and has links with the study of philosophy, sociology, political science and the history of science. Indeed, the changes in public action outlined above probe how various types of knowledge are produced and circulate, are transferred, transformed and hybridized and acquire greater or lesser social legitimacy. The present set of articles relates specifically to the question of knowledge mobilized in decision making processes involving some forms of participation, be they spontaneous or organized, and particularly the status accorded to the knowledge held by actors who, traditionally, have not been viewed as policy makers because they are 'mere' citizens, users or professionals.

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The articles in this issue, nearly all deriving from European Know&Pol[1] research, present case studies, or rereadings of case studies, carried out in various European countries in the areas of health, education and the environment. The objective of the present introductory article is to define how we problematize these issues and situate the above-noted perspective in the literature on this subject.

To this end, we first describe the gradual questioning of the social representations that make scientific knowledge the ideal and benchmark by which we measure all knowledge, often to the point of restricting the term 'knowledge' to scientific knowledge alone. We will show that the authors involved in the deconstruction of these representations often favour an essentialist approach to knowledge, in other words, tend to present the different categories of knowledge as fundamentally distinct. We, on the other hand, and without falling into complete relativism, prefer an approach in which knowledge is understood straight away as relational and constantly intertwined with hybridization processes, thereby rendering it difficult to classify. Then, further circumscribing the subject matter of our analysis, we focus on the interactions that users, citizens and professionals develop with policy making. We analyse what the literature says regarding three questions: (1) what factors prompt users, citizens and professionals to get involved in producing policy? (2) What are the complaints and criticisms levelled at participatory mechanisms as regards the actual status of non-scientific knowledge, and on what are they based? (3) What are the prescriptive approaches proposed by certain authors to provide a more balanced interaction between forms of knowledge conveyed by actors from different social worlds? Having thus staked out our position in the scientific literature, we will then present the articles in this issue, highlighting the key questions they are trying to answer.

2. The gradual challenge to the primacy of scientific knowledge

Since the Enlightenment, scientific knowledge has steadily established itself as an especially valid representation of the world, to the point that it has become common practice to restrict the term 'knowledge' to this particular form for portraying the world, and to avoid using it to refer to other types of representations such as media information, experience-based knowledge, 'common sense' knowledge, artistic expression in all its forms, as well as beliefs and ideologies. In this way, a ''demarcation of science from other intellectual activities'' (Gieryn, 1983, p. 781) and a relative social consensus on often implicit criteria for separating knowledge (scientific) from these other representations have gradually been established. Even today, there is general agreement on the fact that knowledge must be devoid of commitment, ideology, interest or emotion (for fear of being portrayed as opinion or a statement of views); also, knowledge must be based on empirical observation collected using explained methods (for fear of being portrayed as philosophical or theoretical speculation), but must not be mere accumulation of raw data (for fear of being branded as simply information).

The institutionalization of this conceptual category has been associated with the institutionalization of a 'field' (Bourdieu, 1998) and a profession monopolizing most of the production of this knowledge. This 'field' has succeeded, at least until recently, in increasing its autonomy and exercising a certain control over other areas, establishing relationships with its environment that have been highlighted in particular by Latour (1989). Three key elements of this relationship between the field of science and its environment are the 'capturing' of elements of the 'real world' in 'centres of information'; developing 'confined research' based on these elements; and the transfer back to the 'real world' of operating procedures that modify practices. These relationships may serve as vehicles for the undermining or even the extinction of other types of knowledge, as illustrated by the case of plant genetics, in which the development of scientific knowledge gave rise to an ''ebb in the knowledge and practices of agricultural producers in the conservation and use of genetic variability'' (Bonneuil & Demeulenaere, 2007, our translation).

The phenomena of demarcation, greater autonomy and relative domination are the result of long historical processes, and especially of the 'boundary-works' conducted by scientists themselves (Gieryn, 1983). Historical research shows how these processes, often interspersed with periods in which they were challenged, gradually

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established distinctions among categories of knowledge and among types of knowledge 'producers' (see Vetter, 2011, on amateur and professional in the late nineteenth century). As products of historical processes, these boundaries are not immutable; we can assume that nowadays the concept of a clear division between scientific knowledge and other forms of representation has been challenged. Various phenomena have played a role in the challenging and blurring of boundaries separating science from other representations of the world. Following the work of Kuhn (1962), who suggests to leave a hyper-positivist vision to account for the fact that science is the result of socially marked practices, works of philosophy, sociology and the history of science have assisted in this change by portraying the social construction of science as a specific category, and by showing that ''descriptions of science as distinctively truthful, useful, objective or rational may best be analysed as ideologies: incomplete and ambiguous images of science nevertheless useful for scientists' pursuit of authority and material resources'' (Gieryn, 1983, pp. 792–793). Other factors have intervened in this process, such as the development of inter- or trans-disciplinary research and, to an even greater extent, research seeking to integrate non-scientific knowledge into the process of producing scientific knowledge itself (action research, collaborative research, outdoor science).

It was in this context that expressions appending various adjectives or subordinate qualifiers to the term 'knowledge' emerged. For their creators and users, these expressions often sought to show that scientific knowledge was not alone in claiming the status of knowledge. This was often to restore these other modes of representation of the world, not only by showing their strength, their uniqueness and their complementarity to scientific knowledge but also by describing the important role they played – or could play – in guiding the practices of actors. In the area of public policy, research on the role played by these other forms of knowledge in the implementation phases of policies (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973), as in philosophical approaches to deliberative democracy (Bessette, 1980; Habermas, 1996), partook in this process of restoring the prestige of non-scientific knowledge and in turn contributed to the multiplication of participative mechanisms designed to give a greater place to this knowledge.

As evidenced by the inventory prepared by Raymond et al. (2010) in the field of environmental management, the terms used to designate non-scientific knowledge are numerous. They sometimes form part of binary typologies in which they are at odds with scientific knowledge. The abundance of terms and types is partly due to the variety of sectors analysed, the diversity of actors observed (users, indigenous populations, professionals, . . .) and distinctive features that have been singled out. Result: ''the variety of ways in which knowledge has been categorized means there is considerable potential for confusion about the meaning of the terms and their relevance'' (Raymond et al., 2010, p. 1767).

Among the oldest typologies are those that contrast formalized knowledge with partially formalized knowledge, and implicit knowledge with explicit knowledge (Polanyi, 1958); or, in a slightly different vein, common-sense knowledge with scientific knowledge. Other categories rely more on the criterion of the origin of the knowledge; these refer to non-scientific phenomena by employing terms such experience-based or experiential knowledge, indigenous knowledge (Agrawal, 1995) or traditional knowledge (Zamparo, 1996) when they wish to emphasize collective or historical aspects of the production, transmission and evolution of knowledge. Still others refer to criteria based on the geographical extension of the validity and relevance of knowledge: local knowledge (Geerts, 1983) is contrasted to generic knowledge; residential knowledge is contrasted to cosmopolitan knowledge (Kohler, 2006). Some expressions highlight the professional status, or lack thereof, of producers of knowledge, for example by contrasting academic knowledge and lay knowledge. Lastly, in a similar vein, certain terms may allude to categories of actors, by referring to user's knowledge, citizen's knowledge or even professional knowledge.

3. The limits of an essentialist approach

The deconstruction of the 'scientific knowledge' category, just like the exploration of other categories of knowledge, appears to be an important step in a dual process of change. The change is at once cognitive (improving our understanding of the production, distribution and interaction of knowledge) and social (reducing the differential in the legitimacy, and thus the power, of different categories of knowledge). Efforts to deconstruct our representations of knowledge are, however, often deficient or incomplete. Certain approaches (1) continue to promote scientific knowledge, be it implicitly, (2) over-emphasize inter-categorical differences while ignoring similarities, (3) blur

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intra-categorical variations, or (4) hide the fact that the process of producing either one of the knowledge types almost always involves the other type.

(1) As Vetter has stated, terms devised to refer to non-scientific knowledge ''have been criticized for their tendency to privilege science over other knowledge systems'' (Vetter, 2011, p. 132). The fault, in part, may be attributed to the qualifiers or subordinate terms selected, which, deliberately or not, often reveal a flaw in non-scientific approaches (in terms of their degree of formalization, their explicitness, etc.), thereby indirectly promoting scientific knowledge as the ideal towards which one should strive. That said, the choice of adjectives is not the only issue here. It may be that the term 'knowledge' itself has helped perpetuate the pre-eminence of scientific knowledge precisely because in the most recent historical period the term 'knowledge' was virtually synonymous with the term 'scientific knowledge'. The fact that English uses the term 'knowledge' only in its singular[2] form reinforces the impasse in which one finds oneself when attempting to highlight the diversity of knowledge and the social construction of the differential by which its diverse forms are legitimized.

(2) Beyond the issue of the choice of words, we find that, as in all categorical approaches, even those that are ideal-typical, categories of knowledge tend to emphasize differences rather than similarities between knowledge types defined as such. However, in many respects, ''expert knowledge is not unequivocally opposed to common sense knowledge'' (Perrenoud, 1996, our translation). Indigenous knowledge systems, for example, can be described ''on the one hand as very different from Science, but on the other hand as knowledges that are systematic and innovative'' (van der Velden, 2010, p. 3). Carr and Wilkinson, for example, stress similarities between the knowledge of scientists and that of farmers: ''both groups rely upon their tacit knowledge (. . .). Either group may use systemic (self-reflexive) principles of inquiry. They both develop theories, and both experiment. Both farmers and scientists use observation as a favoured occupational tool. Either group may use trial and error methods. Both produce new knowledge and apply that knowledge. Further, both groups use peer review mechanisms, albeit in a different format. Each has its own system of cultural ''rules'' and regulations (which are increasingly overlapping)'' (Carr & Wilkinson, 2005, p. 260). We can see therefore that categories often caricature differences.

(3) The existence of categories tends to erase intra-categorical differences symmetrically. With non-scientific knowledge, the wide variety of terms employed mitigates this risk. This is less so with scientific knowledge, which is referred to in less varied terms, and this helps portray science as a homogeneous body of knowledge or whole. However, differences abound. ''In literature, law, theology, (. . .), much scholarly knowledge is based not on scientific method, but on various forms of erudition, on processes of systematization, formalization, accumulation, comparison, organization and classification of high-level specialized knowledge. (. . .) In some action-oriented faculties – medicine, architecture, engineering schools, law, public administration, business schools – there are mixtures of scientific knowledge (. . .) and knowledge about systems of values and standards'' (Perrenoud, 1996, our translation). As underscored by Gieryn, ''the boundaries of science are ambiguous, flexible, historically changing, contextually variable, internally inconsistent, and sometimes disputed'' (Gieryn, 1983, p. 792). So that ''what is to count as scientific 'fact' rests on a range of more or less local, parochial, intra-disciplinary and micro-political conditions'' (Grove-White & Michael, 1993, p. 139).

(4) One should also be wary of the fact that the use of binary categories ''recognises nothing of the constructive kinds of interaction and mutual inspiration or dependency which may exist between them'' (Wynne, 1996, p. 62). Many authors have shown that non-scientific knowledge was also present in the process of producing scientific[3] knowledge, and that the latter was incorporated into much of the knowledge presented as 'experience-based'. These findings explain the popularity of the concept of hybrid knowledge (Calon, 1986).

[2] The spelling checkers of English-language word processing programs point out that there is "no such thing as *knowledges*" (van der Velden, 2010, p. 1).

[3] It is not only scientists who in the course of their activities confuse 'experience-based knowledge' and scientific knowledge; non-scientific actors, too, are involved in many scientific processes in which the knowledge is not indifferent to the knowledge ultimately produced and stamped as science. In evidence-based medicine, the concept of evidence comes from a scientific approach (e.g. cohort studies), but this is partly rooted in the experiences of patients (for example, as expressed through their feelings about medical protocols).

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4. Naming and categorizing without falling into the trap of essentialism

These key clarifications show that the question of vocabulary is not trivial. They raise questions about the relevance of the term 'knowledge' itself and numerous terms used to categorize this knowledge.

Since it is reserved preferentially for *scientific* knowledge, the term 'knowledge' tends to confirm the social perception that this specific representation of the world of scientific knowledge is at once objective, neutral, not situated and timeless. Conversely, the terms 'representation' (Fourez, 1997) and 'understanding' allow us ''to compass knowledge, perception and conception'' (Ingram, Fry, & Mathieu, 2010, p. 52). They allow us to open up discussion on the values underlying 'knowledge' more directly. They facilitate the awareness that all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is ''a view from somewhere, not a view from nowhere'' (van der Velden, 2010, p. 3), that it is local and situated (Haraway, 1988), in the same way that recognition of the legitimacy of this knowledge, too, is situated (Connelly, Richardson, & Miles, 2006).[4]

Whether one opts for one or the other of these terms, it is important to avoid placing them beside adjectives or subordinate qualifiers too directly associated with a type of agent (such as 'academic knowledge', 'scientific knowledge' or 'indigenous knowledge'). For to do so would suggests that one category of actor is the vehicle for a single type of knowledge, whereas this category is likely to deal with and combine a variety of cognitive elements.

Is it appropriate to categorize the various elements making up the cognitive corpus of communities of actors? If so, is it possible to define them in terms that do not (excessively) validate the social hierarchy of knowledge? In general, it is regrettable that the categories often highlight only one demarcation criterion among others; they tend to make all the other dimensions fall back on just the one, giving the impression, for example, that all experience-based knowledge is implicit, not formalized or of exclusively local significance. Even if one focuses only on the single dimension highlighted by an expression, this expression may often be over-simplified. This is what happened in the case of the expression 'broad view', which certain authors used – as opposed to 'deep view' – to characterize the knowledge of farmers. ''Farmers' knowledge is broad in the sense that it covers a range of aspects related to agricultural production goals although it could be argued that it is not broad in the context of other soil functions such as flood prevention or pollutant filtering'' (Ingram et al., 2010, p. 58).

Faced with these difficulties, should we reject any essentialist approach to knowledge, as advocated by Tsouvalis, Seymour, and Watkins (2000), and declare, ''essentialists *do* boundary work [while] constructivists *watch* it get done'' (Gieryn, 1995, p. 394)? In our view, this issue calls for a balanced approach. Of course, we must avoid binary typologies, which set a term supposedly applicable to all 'scientific knowledge' in opposition to another claiming to group together all other forms of knowledge. It is therefore preferable to speak of the knowledge of a particular class of actors (economists from academia, teachers, health-service users, . . .) while bearing in mind that all this knowledge is made up of various and hybrid cognitive elements. On the other hand, to describe these various elements it is useful to mobilize typologies, though it is advisable to combine several of them to avoid having various dimensions rely on one alone. Among the categories we believe are useful are the following:

- those that distinguish between a broad view (multidimensional, holistic knowledge) and a deep view (one-dimensional, segmented knowledge);
- those that distinguish embedded, contextualized, entangled knowledge from 'disembedded', de-contextualized, and disentangled knowledge (of a place, time, history, ideology, context, . . .);
- those that differentiate knowledge circulating as anecdotes, in narrative form, from those circulating as laws in the form of logical presentations aiming for completeness and detailed explanation.

5. Hybrid knowledge and relational approaches

This work of reconstructing the conceptual universe is related to the type of questions we have selected. Ours is focused on the transfer of knowledge between communities of actors and the processes of transformation, conversion

[4] In the following pages, we use the terms 'knowledge' and 'representation' indiscriminately. The almost exclusive use of the term 'knowledge' in the literature examined in fact makes it difficult to completely avoid this term. However, we invite the reader to keep in mind that the term 'knowledge' conceals a potential trap.

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or translation (Freeman, 2009) unavoidably associated with any transfer or any incorporation of a representation originally held by one category of actors into the corpus of representations of another category of actors.

Transfers and transformations depend especially on differences between the representations of the 'issuer' community and those of the 'receiving' community, and therefore on the public policy reference system (*référentiel*) (Jobert & Muller, 1987), paradigms (Hall, 1993) or core features of the representations (Abric, 2001) that structure, stabilize and provide the parameters for the actors' knowledge and representations. In contrast to these cognitive structures that filter knowledge according to their content, other structural elements filter them according to criteria of legitimacy. This second type of structural element consists of criteria shared by a community to identify what can be described as 'real', as 'fact' or as 'evidence', as well as to identify actors whose word is 'credible'. These structural elements are identified in the literature by the terms 'knowing-from-within' (Shotter, 1985) and 'knowledge culture' (Tsouvalis et al., 2000).

If an actor's knowledge modifies – even marginally – the representations of another actor, this almost inevitably involves an adaptation of the 'new' knowledge to the public policy reference system (*référentiel*) and other criteria of validity of the 'target' actor. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate – for the purposes of getting the idea across to his audience – to de-ideologize his views; in other circumstances the adaptation must avoid removing the emotional content from his views. In doing so, he engages in a process of (re)formatting, which can change knowledge itself by 'subjecting' it to the format expected by his interlocutor(s).

It is possible to analyse the processes of transfer and transformation between any categories of actors, e.g. between two communities of scientists, or between a scientific community and a lay community. In addition, there are many studies on how the knowledge of scientists permeates, or fails to permeate, the knowledge of policy makers, front-line professionals or users (see for example Martuccelli, 2002).

Our topic does not focus on these interactions but on those linking users, citizens or professional to scientists or policy makers. Specifically, we will examine the role and status of 'local' actors' knowledge in knowledge production and the processes of public action. We will broach three themes in turn: what motivates certain actors to get users, citizens and professionals involved in processes policy making (point 6), the actual status of non-scientific knowledge (point 7); standards for providing a better balance in the interactions of actors who are holders of knowledge that has been legitimated in various ways (point 8).

6. The knowledge of citizens, professionals and users in public action

As we have just seen, the question of the relationship between knowledge and society has become more complex in recent years. The knowledge of citizens, professionals and users have become relevant forms of knowledge that will likely co-exist with academic knowledge and scientific expertise. Various forms of hybridization have emerged, thereby ensuring that the new knowledge produced represents a kind of mix, composed to varying degrees of different kinds of knowledge. In other cases, the boundaries between types of knowledge remain clear-cut for a longer period; consequently, these types are destined to compete with one another on the road to legitimacy (Benhabib, 1996; Cohen, 1989).

Several changes in the production of knowledge have also been observed, mutatis mutandis, in the making of public policy. Consequently, it is not surprising that certain questions criss-crossing this field have developed in parallel with those just noted. To what extent is 'local' actors knowledge included in the defining of – and decisions taken on – the management of the social dimensions for which political bodies assume responsibility? Moreover, to what extent do users, citizens and specialists participate in political decision-making?

For decades, these questions could be answered in a straightforward way: it was felt that such knowledge simply did not merit much attention (Owens, 2000). Stated differently, when politicians wanted to address a particular problem, this often came down to seeking the services of one specialized scientist or another and asking her or him to provide information and advice concerning the problem being considered (Horlick-Jones, Rosenhead, Georgiou, Ravetz, & Lofstedt, 2001). Once the knowledge had been produced, and the advice formulated, the political body making the request appropriated it for the purposes of decision-making. This method of functioning was very typical of state models of the bureaucratic type (with a variety of forms depending on local conditions) observed in Western Europe (Pearce, Branyiczki, & Bigley, 2000). Thus, until the 1980s, the issue of participation was generally of a purely theoretical nature.

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However, the 1980s marked a turning point. Since then, under the influence of a two-fold trend, a new participatory rhetoric has gradually been imposed, suggesting that the production of public policies should open up to participation by a wider constellation of actors (citizens, consumers, professionals). There was thus a shift from the public policy-making model of the bureaucratic type to the development of multi-level public action representing a component of what is known as ''New Public Governance'' (Osborne, 2006).

The first trend was that associated with citizens and users (who were, notably, better informed than ever before) whose tone regarding the political world and state action now took the form of protest and criticism (Rethemeyer & Hatmaker, 2008). Denouncing the slowness and cost of bureaucracy and the inadequacy of public policy, citizens and users began – with varying degrees of success – to demand that their expectations and real-life experiences be considered in setting public policy.

The second trend had its origins in the redefinition by states themselves of their own action. The 1980s marked the beginning of the era of New Public Management (NPM). Thus, in its first phase, it would not only see governments adopting policies aimed at the rationalization of resources (Schoenaers, Thunus, & Cerfontaine, 2009), but also witness the spread of the concept of ''accountability''. The latter affected not only state bodies (each ministry was ''responsible'' to citizens and politicians for its effectiveness and efficiency; Hood & Lodge, 2006) but also citizens themselves via the principles of activation (state benefits were dependent on the principle of establishing contract-based links with the beneficiaries of the action; Vrancken, 2002). By proceeding in this way, governments increasingly became facilitators (Donzelot & Estebe, 1994), leaving to the grassroots of society the tasks of implementing policy and then tracking information on its progress. Later, the New Public Governance would propose new benchmarks for state action. Among other things, varieties of discourse accentuating involvement became dominant. In this new environment, it was expected that greater emphasis would be placed on partnerships, networks and new forms of cooperation among various actors in the public sphere, citizens included (Newman & Clarke, 2009; Rondeaux, 2006).

By monitoring these new practices (activism and activation of the citizen) and the new discourse (NPM and NPG), the phenomenon of participation becomes apparent in many fields of public policy making. Nowadays, no government would dare claim that the information and real-life experiences of grassroots or professional groups were not relevant factors to be considered in shaping public policy. Does this necessarily mean that there is a kind of comprehensive and uniform ''standard'' of participation applicable to all contexts of policy making? It is worth lingering on this point for a moment to put into perspective what may be hidden behind the concept of the participation (and, by extension, the inclusion and legitimacy) of local actors knowledge in public action.

In this perspective, the works of Arnstein (1969), which have been taken up by numerous authors (Gustafsson & Driver, 2005; May, 2006), provide us with a very interesting ranking of levels of participation. By analysing an entire range of public action contexts, Arnstein realized that the forms and effectiveness of participation by citizens and professionals could vary greatly, even though in many cases the rhetoric expressed at the outset seemed to be held in common. Arnstein has eight stages of participation in his ranking:

Rank	Types	Description	Examples
8	Citizen control	Complete control of decision making	Neighbourhood associations, cooperatives, referendums and initiatives
7	Delegated power	Dominant decision-making authority	Final approval over plan or some aspect of a plan
6	Partnership	Shared planning and decision-making responsibilities	Joint policy boards, planning committees
5	Placation	Selective inclusion on public bodies	Appointments to boards such as police commissions, housing authorities
4	Consultation	Inviting opinions	Attitude surveys, public hearings
3	Informing	Dissemination of information	New media, posters and responses to inquiries
2	Therapy	Changing view of cause of problem	Clinical group therapy
1	Manipulation	Educate or engineer support	Placed on neighbourhood advisory boards, rubber stamping

The first observation made in reading this table is that it answers the question raised above, namely, whether or not the phenomenon of participation is uniform. Without a doubt, the answer is negative. It is clear that each case is very different, leaving us with the impression that participation is polymorphic in form. Next, it should be noted that the

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works of Arnstein unquestionably have a normative dimension. In his table, the higher one moves up in the ranking, the greater the power of the grassroots and the higher the quality of the participation. Let us leave aside the recurring criticisms directed at the author (Bishop & Davis, 2002) while retaining the classification's strong assumption that the higher up one moves in the ranking the greater the legitimacy of knowledge from citizens, professionals or users in the process of setting public policy. Accordingly, one is trying to identify the capacity of social and professional actors to participate effectively in policymaking and in that way identify 'their' legitimated knowledge.

The first predictor of variations among the various degrees of participation is the attitude of the political actor. As Rowe and Frewer point out (2004), ''It would be too simplistic to attribute the growth of interest in participation entirely to greater respect by institutional actors for public views on policy issues. There is undoubtedly a certain amount of pragmatism involved in endorsing public participation with institutions recognizing that a non consulted public is often an angry one and that involving the public may be one step towards mollifying it. Certainly, some policy formulators may be more concerned with increasing public confidence in the policy process than truly seeking the views of the public''. This means, therefore, that participation may sometimes be exploited by politicians to legitimize an orientation already adopted, at least partially. Other cases reveal political actors genuinely seeking the opinion of the public and professionals. The type of meaningful participation provided to the parties involved – or, stated differently, the higher or lower positioning on the Arnstein ranking – will depend on the stance adopted by the political actors. In the process, and in addition to the degree of empowerment of the citizens, users and professionals, it is also the form of their participation per se that is defined implicitly by the attitude of the political actor. This attitude implicitly delimits the actual form of participation, as well as the degree of empowerment of citizens, users and professionals. Thus, it is possible to identify configurations ranging from basic information provided by citizens to more elaborate forms in which the citizen is a co-producer of public policy. Moreover, we must also take into account the nature and purpose of the latter. The way in which the ''participating citizen'' is seen in a particular political context at a given time will influence the expectations that are addressed to him/her in terms of participation. Thus, during the 80s, in an era of hegemony of the New Public Management, the citizen is considered as a consumer of public services. One will assign him/her the responsibility of a type of involvement which refers to a market logic. The citizen is then supposed to define which devices or services are the best for him/her and relay that to the top through various bodies. Thereafter, the movement of New Public Governance will establish the figure of a citizen who becomes co-maker and co-producer of services. His/her assign role should be much more substantial.

The literature proposes a second predictor of the development of a participatory democracy that can effectively integrate the knowledge of citizens, users or professionals. This second variable is the degree of centralization of the state. For Gerring, Thacker, and Moreno (2005), it seems that the more a state is centralized, the harder it is for the state to truly deliver an effective opportunity for empowerment at the grassroots level. In this context, the gap between central power and grassroots power is so wide that it seems difficult to find concrete mechanisms for integrating knowledge of 'local' actors with policy making. The example of decision-making referendums practiced in various countries reveals strong decision-making power at the base of society; at the same time, however, the knowledge underpinning the final decision is neither developed nor discussed. Thus, citizens' choices depend more on how they position themselves relative to the discussions of experts or politicians (Lijphart, 1999). Conversely, it appears that greater decentralization, providing local entities with significant capacity to manage the public good, could be a breeding ground for integrating users or citizens, as well as for the knowledge they convey (La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1999).

The link between knowledge of 'local' actors and the making of public policy requires taking methods of participation into consideration. Historically, this link appears to have gradually grown stronger because a complete array of participatory rhetoric emerged in political discourse. However, there is sometimes a wide gap between the interdisciplinary rhetoric that sets many countries apart and any meaningful practices that might be observed in these countries. Among other things, practices depend on the attitudes of the political world (and on its degree of ''sincerity'' in accepting to take experiential knowledge into consideration), as well as on path dependencies related to the model of state organization (degree of centralization).

The elements that were developed above allow to understand that taking into account the knowledge of local actors but also the very nature of the knowledge that will be legitimized in the decision making depend on a multitude of factors. The historical and political contexts (degree of centralization) but also the type of governance privileged by the State at a given time (NPG vs. NPM) can influence both the ability for local actors to access the decision making and the type of knowledge considered as relevant.

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7. How the knowledge of non-scientists is affected by these processes

The professionals and users involved in these processes of producing knowledge and policies complain of the treatment to which their knowledge is subjected, while there is a similar reaction on the part of authors developing a critical analysis of these participatory processes. Two main categories of complaints and criticisms arise regularly. Some highlight the fact that the knowledge of citizens, professionals and users is filtered; others accentuate the use of 'new knowledge' as an instrument of power over those who have helped to create it.

The knowledge of users, citizens and professionals that is actually incorporated into new knowledge or policies often seems quite tenuous. What was expressed in participatory processes seems, ultimately, to be, highly filtered, transformed or carefully selected, to the point that the participatory mechanisms are often viewed as 'gadgets' or techniques used for the purposes of legitimating. Frequently, the actors consulted see themselves (or are viewed by the analyst) as having been manipulated or exploited. For example, in the health field, ''a profound ambiguity still weighs heavy on the user, who is more the individual in whose name one speaks than an individual who speaks on his or her own behalf. (. . .) Users more often than not constitute an 'issue' in discussions among professionals rather than play a real role, and many professionals try to exploit them to justify their own cause'' (Lascoumes, 2003, p. 64, our translation). This type of exploitation does not, however, affect the knowledge of citizens, users and professionals alone. For example, (research) scientists, too, undergo similar experiences when their knowledge is incorporated into other actors' knowledge or into policies. Filtered, carefully selected and transformed, it also serves to legitimate and is exploited.

The second complaint or criticism applies more specifically to citizens, users and professionals: it concerns the use made of policies or new knowledge formally based on participatory processes. In fact, quite frequently one outcome of the process is that it generates instruments, particularly knowledge-based regulation tools, for regulating the practices of users and professionals (Pons & van Zanten, 2007). For example, these may take the form of guidelines, training and guides to good practices. A process of rationalization often takes power away from those who have 'delivered' their knowledge and then see it transformed into codified knowledge. ''When a tacit or invisible field of experience-based knowledge is formalized, this potentially opens up a new field of power for the employer, or for an elite in the professional group, or potential experts. The group may run the risk here of loosing their professional autonomy'' (Demailly, 2001, p. 539, our translation). Yet, ''conversely, the formalization of the experience can, in other power configurations, provide a professional development resource for an individual or group, and serve as a source of social recognition for hidden dimensions of work'' (Demailly, 2001).

The two types of complaint or criticism outlined above often result from the fact that the citizens, users and professionals associated with the participatory processes are in a position of subordination. They have no control over the process. They control neither its upstream aspects (defining the issues and the problematization, selecting the individuals who will make a contribution . . .) nor its core aspects (animation techniques, agenda setting . . .) nor its downstream aspects (summary reports, the new knowledge that has been produced and disseminated . . .). In addition, the form of knowledge expected at the end of the process often bears little relation to the format of the local actors' knowledge; it is closer to the form of knowledge advanced by scientists or policy makers. This final form usually results in the loss of certain key features in the knowledge of users and professionals (Demsky & Nassehi, in this special issue). Ellis (2005) provides a detailed analysis of how the traditional knowledge of Canadian indigenous peoples is filtered and transformed when this knowledge is collected by scientists. He identifies three types of barriers. The first is communicational: traditional knowledge is indeed ''often communicated in ways that are foreign to conventional scientific style, using metaphor, analogy, and myth to transmit cultural values or information. (. . .) Such speakers rarely limit themselves to a specific topic, but rather provide holistic analyses and broad statements'' (Ellis, 2005, p. 71). There are also conceptual barriers that lead some to consider certain knowledge as ''unworthy of serious discussion'' or that result in ''the 'scientization' of traditional knowledge'' (Agrawal, 2002). In this way, scientific criteria lead to abandoning that which is descriptive, anecdotal or mythical, leaving only that which is analytical, systematic and factual, as well as neglecting that which cannot be subjected to scientific tests for assessing the ''replicability, rationality, rigor and universality'' of knowledge, or keeping only the data amenable to storage and processing using scientific tools. The third type of barrier is political: ''unwillingness to acknowledge traditional-knowledge messages that may conflict with the agendas of government or industry'' (Ellis, 2005, p. 66).

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8. The quest for (more) symmetrical forms of interaction

These complaints and criticisms have led many researchers to develop forms of normative and propositional thinking, or sometimes to create or improve what the literature refers to as boundary sites or organizations, contact zones (Pratt, 1998, quoted by van der Velden, p. 11) or cross-worlds scenes (Delvaux, 2010).

This extensive literature proposes, among other things, typologies of interactive processes, often binary, in which one of the two categories is presented as the ideal to attain. For example, Lascoumes proposes making a distinction between the suppletive model and the cooperative model. In both cases, the words of the non-professional person are taken into account, but in the second case ''they are no longer tolerated or produced by crisis but correspond to a search for equalization of the verbal exchanges between professionals and non-professionals'' (Lascoumes, 2003, p. 67, our translation). The US National Research Council distinguishes between 'cooperative research' and 'collaborative research', with the latter differentiating itself through ''more fully integrated'' partnerships (Hartley & Robertson, 2009, p. 53). van der Velden, who is interested in ICT-based Knowledge Management, makes a distinction between 'knowledge-centred approaches' (for ''the collection and codification of knowledge'') and 'knower-centred approaches' (''creating enabling situations in which knowledge can be shared in more informal way'') (van der Velden, 2010, p. 6). Similarly, Raymond et al. (2010) contrast 'knowledge integration products' and 'knowledge integration processes'. In all of these cases, normative categorizations enhance the status of mechanisms ensuring greater symmetry between actors (Watson-Verran & Turnbull, 1995) or, more radically, 'cognitive justice', that is, the right of different knowledge systems to exist (Visvanathan, 2005).

Our objective, here, is not to develop a critical analysis of those categories with a normative dimension, but simply to explicit what the researchers aim to promote through them. According to these authors – and others sharing these ideas – the mechanisms whose status needs to be enhanced are those that create conditions promoting:

- reflexivity: ''Overall, to address the epistemological challenges, participants need to be much more aware of their own and others' philosophical and epistemological positions, how these positions impact knowledge integration, and that their views are unlikely to be the same as others'' (Raymond et al., 2010);
- mutual understanding: the initiators must be ''less concerned with establishing and maintaining boundaries and more with defining procedural rules, enhancing mutual understanding, and proposing normative orientations to make the co-production a collective process of policy culture'' (Pohl, 2008, p. 50); they should seek to create, as advocated by Clifford (1997), ''a space where knowledge system not meet as 'sociocultural wholes' but as ''systems already constituted relationally, entering new relations through historical processes of displacement'' (van der Velden, 2010, p. 11);
- dealing with the issue of power within the mechanism itself;
- paying just as much attention to the process as to the end item.

9. In this issue

The articles in the present issue consider the questions identified above. Four of these articles come directly from Know&Pol's European research. Three of them were also discussed at a panel organized as part of the Sixth International Conference in Interpretive Policy Analysis. Six articles present case studies while the seventh proposes a cross-disciplinary rereading of six other case studies. In this way, the twelve case studies presented directly or indirectly in the articles fall into three areas of public policy (mental health, education, environment) and deal with eight European countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Portugal, Romania and Scotland).

It is no coincidence that three of the articles deal with the mental health sector and that this area is frequently mentioned in the cross-disciplinary article. Indeed, mental health was one of the sectors manifesting a strong tendency to give greater space and voice to users. While Marte Feiring addresses the problem from a broad analytical perspective, carrying out a historical analysis of rehabilitation policy implemented in Norway, the other two texts narrow the perspective, focusing on concrete participatory mechanisms: Jennifer Smith-Merry analyses a Scottish public consultation mechanism dealing with a comprehensive action plan for ''a mentally flourishing Scotland'', while Sophie Thunus and Frederick Schoenaers study a Belgian consultation mechanism bringing together individuals involved in experimental therapeutic projects and designed to lead to policy recommendations. In their own way, each of these three articles highlights the complex relationships between 'local' actors (users, professionals) and traditional

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policy-makers. Marte Feiring demonstrates how, in its most recent stages, rehabilitation policy has been transformed through adding new technologies of government to traditional governance instruments (laws, training programs), rather than replacing them. These developments, she says, have made the dynamics of interaction between the various categories of actors much more complex and have resulted in two dilemmas: ''One is related to the fact that it is problematic both to increase the government logic of control and monitoring and to enhance user involvement and empowerment. Another is that it is difficult to follow the advice of objective scientific evidence at the same time as the individual user is said to have the last word''. The other two case studies are similar in purpose but also as regards their central issue: that of knowledge translation processes. Both studies also highlight the gap between the lofty goals formally set for the participatory mechanisms and the relatively low weight carried by the opinions of 'local' actors in affecting the end outcomes as well as the frequent dissatisfaction of these actors. But they also highlight other significant impacts; these are more informal and sometimes unexpected. Jennifer Smith-Merry emphasizes the delayed impact of the participatory mechanism in the public policy implementation process: ''practitioner participation in the consultation is found to be a productive process of learning or education which aids in the development of a policy community more aware of its role in relation to the new policy''. For their part, Sophie Thunus et Frédéric Schoenaers highlight the indirect influence of those who, following their involvement in the mechanism, become human '*porteurs*' rather than mere equipment associated with the knowledge exchanged during the participatory process. This is why these authors propose to go ''away with an evaluation of the device in terms of its effects, themselves understood through the lens of direct causality'' and opt instead for a broader analysis of the '*portée*' (scope) of such devices (Chateauraynaud, 2011).

The environment is one of the other areas where citizen participation has often been in the spotlight. This is the sector broached by Helena Leino and Juha Peltomaa. Their focus is the action taken on the initiative of citizens to restore a Finnish lake overgrown with algae. Their study is an illustration of the tension between the knowledge of citizens and that of public actors. It shows how the first type of knowledge has managed to gain public legitimacy ''but fails to reassure the local environmental municipalities in terms of what is considered as valid information''. More fundamentally, the authors stress the need for analysts and those in charge of public policy to examine how the situated legitimacy of knowledge is constructed differently each time, to be able to rethink the interaction between ''norms set by multi-level governing organs and the practices of implementation at the local level''.

The last article, written by Alma Demszky and Armin Nassehi, synthesizes data from six case studies in the areas of health and education. It raises two main questions. The first relates to the reasons for the growth in social legitimacy of the knowledge of non-scientists. The authors isolate three such reasons: the 'qualitative change', the new democratic ideal and the new focus on the public policy implementation phase. The other question involves the limits of the political use of experience-based knowledge; these stem in particular from the need to adapt this knowledge to the ''special format'' of knowledge used in politics. The authors note that when this kind of knowledge enters the political sphere it gradually becomes less experience-based and evolves towards a more analytical format. However, in so doing, the knowledge with which one starts loses part of its specific character. Thus, in becoming more scientific, experience-based knowledge loses much of its intrinsic character, that is, as knowledge based on experience, Nonetheless, as the authors state this transformation does not mark the end of a process, but ''the beginning of a new circuit''.

The same could be said not only for the present introductory article but also for the present issue as a whole.

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