Into the Field: a Reflexive Narration of Critical Policy Studies

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Abstract

This article aims at presenting a narrative of Critical Policy Studies as a school of thought that is built, reflexively, within the Policy Studies field, consolidating and pluralizing it. This approach, although little known in Brazil, represents, increasingly, an alternative and a consistent path of studies, that distinguishes itself by assuming the centrality of language as an unit of analysis in policy processes; choosing interpretation as a method; taking the arguments as the main research material and post-positivism as its purpose. Methodologically, this article has been built through a narrative review of the literature and it adopted, as a starting point, the discussion forum on "what is critical?", published in the Critical Policy Studies Review (2016 edition), and the Handbook of Critical Policy Studies itself (Fischer, Torgerson, Durnová & Orsini, 2016). In five sections, we narrate the development of Critical Policy Studies School passing, mainly, through interpretative and argumentative approaches, seeking to establish fertile dialogues with analysts, bureaucrats, managers and researchers. As well as with all those interested in facing the challenges of producing other narratives and developing new research and teaching processes in this field of studies, with the objective of making the Policy Studies field more diverse and more consistent with the Brazilian reality. We conclude that, paradoxically, the plurality - disciplinary, epistemological, methodological, theoretical and thematic - that characterizes the development of the Policy Studies field, in Brazil, still falls short of meaning more participatory, inclusive and democratic public policies. In this sense, we believe that the effort to contribute to the introduction of this literature in the Brazilian Policy Studies field not only presupposes the adoption of a critical-reflexive research

stance, but also represents a first step towards the adoption of increasingly democratizing practices in the Policy field.

Keywords: policy field critical policy studies; postpositivism; argumentation; interpretation.

Introduction

The field of Policy Studies is currently gaining momentum in Brazil. On the one hand, an increasing number of scholars have been triggering important theoretical-methodological dialogues with other disciplinary or interdisciplinary fields, producing an increasingly plural and interesting set of applied studies in public policy; on the other hand, though, these dialogues usually fall short of taking reflexivity as a principle, making it difficult to return the results of such reflexivity to the Policy field, what may end up curbing both its necessary expansion and its further deepening. We understand that reflexive paths are those which assume, above all, both the efforts to tell the story and to structure the field itself. In Brazil, these paths have been opened by authors such as Brasil and Capella (2016), Capella (2006), Farah (2016), Faria (2003) and Souza (2006). Other examples of initiatives aiming at the pluralization of the policy field are based on the inclusion of new actors, new themes or research agendas and new theoretical and methodological approaches in policy studies. It is the cases of recent works published by Rebecca Abers, Marcelo Kunrath Silva and Luciana Tatagiba (2018), on the relations between social movements and public policy or, still, of the researches they have developed on state-society repertoires of interaction (Abers, Serafim & Tatagiba, 2014), institutional activism (Abers & Tatagiba, 2015) and bureaucratic activism in the environmental field (Abers, 2019). In the same direction goes the work of Roberto Pires (2017) on the reproduction of inequalities in the research agendas about state agents and social representations and also the works gathered in the book *Teoria e análises sobre implementação de políticas públicas no Brasil,* edited by Lotta (2019) and authored by Gomes (2019), Koga, Viana, Camões and Filgueiras (2019), and Spink and Burgos (2019).

This set of efforts points to a growing search for theoretical, epistemological and methodological innovations within a field of studies and practices that is no longer limited to the initial bonds of policy orientation proposed, in its first version, by Harold Lasswell (1951). Initially developed under the stated influence of pragmatism (Lasswell, 1951, 1971), this first version is characterised by assuming a strong state-centric understanding of public policies, by defending the primacy of instrumental rationality, by assuming the dissociation between value and fact, by strongly appealing to multidisciplinary, as well as by proposing an understanding of public policies in cycles or stages and by advocating that the design of solutions to public problems occurs through linear decomposition processes, to be carried out by specialists (policymakers) technically prepared for such a task (Lasswell, 1951, 1960, 1968, 1970, 1971).

Since Lasswell's Policy Orientation (1951), the field of policy studies has had its architecture and its possibilities of action radically altered, resulting in a new field, marked by plurality. In fact, in view of an increasingly complex architecture, in the decades following Lasswell, the first efforts to interpret the field developments have emerged, among which we highlight those of Bernstein (1976), Capano and Giuliani (1996), De Leon (1988), De Leon and Martell (2006), Dye (1972), Faria (2003), Heclo (1972), Regonini (2001). In order to further understand this plurality, which is vital to

situate the objectives of this article later on, we will resort to three different images: a monocentric image (already characterized above), that represents its beginning, mainly described by Lasswell; a tricentric image, which represents one of the possible readings of the field architecture between the 1970s and 1980s; and a polycentric image that represents a possible way of reading the field in the early 2000s (Boullosa, 2018; Regonini, 2001).

If we stick to this line of reasoning, it is possible to say that the architecture that emerges in the 1980s – related to the tricentric image - seems to be a consequence of three different poles created thus far. The first – and also the broadest and most consolidated one – seems to remain reasonably faithful to the Lasswellian principles, but has developed itself within a narrower rationalism, strongly marked by the influence of analytical philosophy. A rationalism that increasingly moves closer to economics and artificial intelligence. For also being faithful to the dissociation between fact and value, it continues to reaffirm the centrality of the state and, methodologically, declares itself more and more empiricist. The second pole is relatively less consolidated but has already begun to take shape. In spite of recognizing that policy and politics are distinct objects, this path precisely criticises the excess of instrumental rationality in the definition of public problems and in the design of their solutions, seeking more inclusive alternatives mainly in regard to theoretical references. It is a path committed to a more normative understanding of the policy processes, with emphasis on incrementalism and on the first studies on bureaucracy (Dahl & Lindblom, 1953, Easton, 1965; Lindblom, 1959; Wildavsky, 1979). And, finally, a third one, still in its initial developments, characterized by presenting even harsher criticism to rational-empiricism. This pole anchors itself in epistemological disagreements around the very concept of knowledge and its production processes. This pole strongly advocates for the re-politicization of the policy processes, emphasizing that all knowledge should be implicated in specific value frameworks and that the purpose of public policies should always point to a democratic (and democratizing) management of society and its problems (Bernstein, 1971, 1976; Dye, 1972; Heclo, 1972; Lindblom, 1979; Rein & Schön, 1977; Tribe, 1972; Weiss, 1972). The third configuration of the field, besides being denser, also started to welcome and to allow the emergence of new analytical frameworks, labels, theories, approaches or schools of thought, all responsible for the expansion of that first Lasswellian version of the policy field.

In order to create this third policy field "image », we have resorted to the Italian scholar Gloria Regonini (2001), one of the authors who advances it the most in proposing a classification of the field of policy studies by schools of thought. Her proposal emerges from the intersection between the prescriptive and descriptive categories, on the one hand, and normative and empirical, on the other. As a result, she classifies the movements of the field construction into four macro-schools: rational policy analysis, policy inquiry, policy making studies (the one who divides the policy process into cycles) and that of public choice. We consider these schools she classifies as centres of attraction for the development of new approaches and theories, helping to build this image of the policy field's development in the early 2000s. Even if Regonini (2001) channels her efforts to classifying only what she calls the most rationalist tradition, she recognizes that it does not cover all emerging possibilities, because she maps out three "new" (p. 89) approaches that would deny, to some extent, such a tradition, identified by her as post-positivist, pragmatist and argumentative. Precisely for this reason, she preferred to leave it unclassified (Regonini, 2001).

Putting it into perspective, the first image of the field was born strongly monocentric. Three decades later, a second "tricentric" image presented itself, formed by three different poles of attraction, each one with different dimensions and strengths. Two decades later, at the beginning of the 2000s, the field presents itself in a third image, even more plural, now constituted by at least five poles – considering Regonini's "unclassified" ones (2001) as yet another pole. Of these five poles, however, we believe that four of them have been developed from the two largest ones present in the previous image, while the fifth one was directly associated with the third and smallest pole of the second image (Boullosa, 2018; Regonini, 2001). This article focuses, precisely, over this last (and hard to classify) pole, in an attempt to provide one possible interpretation of its developments and its internal architecture. For quite some time, this pole has been called Critical Policy Studies (Fischer, Torgerson, Durnová & Orsini, 2016). It was so named due to its proximity to Habermasian Critical Theory, but also because it has always been presented as an alternative to rational-empiricist tradition.

In order to tell the story of Critical Policy Studies and aiming at contributing to its diffusion in the Brazilian field of policy studies, we have carried out a narrative review of the literature (Rother, 2007), starting from two main theoretical loci: (a) the discussion Forum proposed by the journal Critical Policy Studies 9th edition, which, in turn, expands a discussion initiated at the 9th International Conference in Interpretive Policy Analysis (IPA), held in Wageningen, in 2014, under the motto "What is critical?" (Fischer, Braun & Plehweon, 2016); (b) the Handbook of Critical Policy Studies (Fischer, Torgerson, Durnová & Orsini, 2016) itself, a manual with an exclusive focus on critical policy approaches – whether cultural, historical, post-structural, constructivist, argumentative, interpretive, etc. This narrative review of the literature aims at gathering and presenting the "state of the art" of critical policy studies, based on 25 essays that, attentive to traditional and innovative assumptions, highlights the urgent need for more democracy and for the better capacity to adapt to different realities, as well as in the production of knowledge about and for public policy.

From the six articles published in the Critical Policy Studies Forum in 2016, we mapped sixty works, written by 54 authors. With this map in hand, we looked at most referenced authors, which led us to a list headed by the names of Frank Fischer, David Howarth, Antonio Gramsci, Jürgen Habermas, Jennifer Dodge, Terry Eagleton, Max Horkheimer, Bruno Latour and Karl Marx, for example. However, as we were more interested in the development of Critical Policy Studies and not in Critical Theory itself, we focused on authors who directly dialogue with the field of policy studies, which led us to pay special attention to names like Fischer, Habermas, Dodge and Howarth. To these names, we added those who contributed to the Handbook of Critical Policy Studies, with emphasis to the work of Frank Fischer himself - which goes back to 1990s, when "The Argumentative Turn on Policy Analysis and Planning" (Fischer & Forester, 1993) was published – but also to the essays written by Anna Durnová, David Howarth and Steven Griggs, Douglas Torgerson, Dvora Yanow, Kathrin Braun, Raul Lejano, Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça and Vivien Schmidt. Finally, we adopted the snowball sampling technique, using the chapters of the Handbook as our basis, which left us a set of approximately fifty works and 32 authors, directly linked to the birth or to the development of the Critical Policy Studies approach. In this article, our reflections, analysis, results and conclusions all derive from this plural bibliographic set, which dialogues with the Habermasian critical theory, but which also adopts new theoretical frameworks, multiple methodological paths,

complex analysis structures and diverse research materials, presenting "language" as its singularizing element.

Looking backwards, and based on "language", authors like David Edelman (1971), Richard Bernstein (1971), Laurence Tribe (1972), Carol Weiss (1972), Frank Fischer (1980), Daniel Callahan and Bruce Jennings (1983), Douglas Torgerson (1985), Deborah Stone (1988), John Dryzek (1989; 1990), Giandomenico Majone (1981; 1989), Frank Fischer and John Forester (1993); Donald Schön and Martin Rein (1994) and, more recently, Mary Hawkesworth (1994), Dvora Yanow (1996); Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (2006), Ana Durnová and Philippe Zittoun (2011) and Rosana Boullosa (2013; 2019) took on the relevant challenge of adopting reflexivity as an organizing element of a new way of thinking and designing public policy. Such a posture enabled a breeding-ground for new knowledge constructions and practices and established, even politically, a possible alternative to the rational-empiricist tradition. This shift showed at least two important reflexes: on the one hand, it boosted the construction of a more plural arena, in which other agents, hitherto invisible, felt stimulated by the novelties brought by the critical studies; and, on the other hand, it was responsible for consolidating the field of policy studies as a scientific field in the Bourdiesian sense (Bourdieu, 1966).

Thus, the objective of this article is to collaborate with the reflexive reconstruction of the recent history of critical studies, as part of the field of policy studies. This effort differs from precedent ones for two main reasons, which could also be read as specific objectives. The first reason is that we place our view on the field of policy studies itself, seeking to produce a narrative that articulates both developments: that of the field and that of critical policy studies. And, to a certain extent, this points to the reconstruction of the history of the field itself, as well as to our personal reconstruction, as scholars inserted in this field. The second reason is that we seek to introduce the thematic plurality and new approaches of which critical policy studies are representative in the Brazilian context, shedding light on the need to enlarge the field of policy studies even further.

This article is structured in five sections, including this introductory one that presents not only a research gap, interlocutors and the article objectives, as well as a brief contextualisation both of the field of policy studies and the emergence of critical policy studies. The second part is dedicated to the emergence of the rational-empiricist tradition criticism, in the still embryonic field of policy studies, with special attention to its first contradictions and interdicts. Those criticisms are mainly focused on the excess of the instrumental rationality that characterizes Lasswell's policy orientation. In the third part, we seek to follow the paths that lead to interpretive and argumentative approaches, what can be considered as a linguistic turn in public policy, with strong reverberations on research analysis and empirical levels. And, finally, we present the construction of Critical Policy Studies as a school of thought within the field of policy studies, which brings together a considerable set of approaches that assumes the dimension of power in deeper structures of language, namely, arguments and values. Resulting from a strong critical reflexivity, such studies denaturalize the processes of meaning and sensemaking and reveal the normative frameworks that continuously dispute the validation of the constructed meanings. Thus, we conclude by problematizing the potentialities of this "label" in the Brazilian context, particularly in what concerns undergraduate education in public policy.

The emergence of rational-empiricist tradition's criticism at the beginning of the field construction

The idea that policy could become a field of study was born under strong criticism. The most combative of them began to be outlined in the late 1960s, based on efforts to construct new theoretical-analytical foundations, in addition to the outlines initially proposed by Harold Lasswell (1951, 1960) and later influenced by analytical philosophy (Boullosa, 2019). At that time the scientific models strongly rooted in economics used to prevail in attempting to explain society its problems and the ways to solve them in a rational-linear way. Alongside with this belief, however, policy scholars and practitioners were beginning to doubt such rationality that had never actually been able to solve the main public problems with which society was already tired of dealing as promised. In addition to becoming increasingly complex and transversal, many problems overflowed the local dimension and some even crossed national borders, as was (and still is) the case of urban poverty problem (Callahan & Jennings, 1983, Fischer, 1998/2016a; Tribe, 1972 Weiss, 1976).

The search for new foundations was inspired by authors who had already been calling attention to the existence of different types of rationalities, in addition to the economic one, problematizing, even in different measures and outside this field of studies, the discursive and normative dimensions of social relations. These authors had exposed the disputes among different models of rationality, by means of instruments of power and control. Among the works that formed such a critical basis, we shall mention those of Stephen Toulmin (1950, 1958), on logics and fields of argument (which was important, above all, for reaffirming arguments as a fundamental unit of analysis of social and political relations); of Hannah Arendt (1958/2007) on the limits of human condition as well as the ethical dimension of the *vita activa* (for drawing attention to the need to denaturalize taken for granted processes in the shaping and reproduction of society and its values); of Jürgen Habermas (1962/1994, 1973/1976) on rationality, language and communication (known for establishing a bridge between social sciences, normative research and, later, public policy, in the context of critical theory); the works of Michel Foucault (1966, 1970, 1975) on power, coercion devices and society (important for drawing attention to the fact that power does not emanate only from government authorities or institutions, but pervades devices themselves or, even more precisely, in speeches); and those of Pierre Bourdieu (1966, 1976), about the power relations inherent to the scientific field and the conditions of knowledge production (for introducing relevant concepts, such as practice, *habitus* and scientific field).

Rooted in discussions about alternative rationalities, new works began, in the 1970s, to highlight the limits of policy sciences, by affinity or opposition. Richard Bernstein (1971, 1976), an American philosopher, offered important contributions to problematize not only the relationship between praxis and action, but also the analytical possibilities offered by language, phenomenology and critical theory. Taking Karl Marx and Friedrich Hegel as backgrounds, Bernstein (1971) discusses praxis departing from concepts such as action and consciousness (Søren Kierkegaard), existence (Jean Paul Sartre), logical action (Charles S. Peirce) and conduct (John Dewey), expanding his criticism to the analytical philosophy, which was already replacing classic pragmatism in the American academic scene, since the early 1960s (Boullosa, 2019).

With hermeneutic sensitivity, the selection of authors presented by Bernstein clearly pointed to the existence of other rationalities opposed to the analytical-linear one. His belief brings the

debate on the limits of rationality to political science, since he considered policy sciences as the very embodiment of the rationality project that he criticized so much. Bernstein's appeal turned to the assumption of "practice" as the building locus of social meanings and his 1976's work proposed a restructuring of social and political theories, presenting and discussing, philosophically, four new paths of study: empiricism, language, alternative phenomenology, and social critical theory. With these two works, he was able to reorganize, in only half a decade, the limits of social sciences philosophy and to offer theoretical and analytical ground for further developments, which were soon to be taken over by a growingly consistent group of policy scholars. Even without recognizing the policy studies as an independent field, he ended up strongly contributing to its expansion.

Another fundamental work in the process of expansion and pluralization of the field of policy studies was that of Laurence Tribe (1972), researcher and professor of Law at Harvard University. He shows that, if there really was a specific field of policy studies, it would be a field in continuous dispute. Tribe's blunt criticisms mark the beginning of growing contradictory pressures inside the field, precisely because they consistently denounce the obedience of the "new" field to "old" principles - the positivist principles of transparency, empirical verifiability, objectivity and neutrality. Anchored in the works of Michel Foucault on institutions and power, the author insists on the inextricable correlation between fact and value and on the need to make evident value frameworks underlying allegedly rational policy analysis. As an example, he problematizes the intrinsic subjectivity to what is meant by "gain" or "improvement" (Tribe, 1972). With this, he argues that it was no longer possible to ignore that every action is projected under and over a specific value framework.

It is important to emphasize, however, that, when doubting the existence of a field, Tribe (1972) does not deny the importance of public policy as an object of study. On the contrary, he criticizes their basis, considering them too limiting and, therefore, usually misleading. For this author, policy science is not meant to be directed to problems (or results), but to processes. And, in this sense, the policymaker is not meant to be concerned with answering pre-formulated questions, but with shaping new alternatives, even those never conceived before or those which challenge traditional values postulated by decision makers. For Tribe (1972), it was the excess of "economicism" that fed the illusion that policymakers would be capable of rationally maximizing collective satisfactions. His criticism was strongly echoed among those who could not see significant progresses in solving the main public problems, usually contradicting evaluations that, paradoxically, showed good results in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, but that were not sustained outside their specific value frameworks.

As early as the 1970s, another author emerged with a vigorous work on the importance of values and meanings underlying policy processes. Carol Weiss (1972, 1979), a social scientist, pointed out her criticisms and her propositions to the evaluative dimension, developing it in a perspective that privileged the explanation of normative frameworks in the production of meanings in such contexts – that she had considered as research contexts. Unlike the others, C. Weiss seeks to establish dialogue with peers that were already part of the policy studies field, as were the cases of Charles Lindblom, Robert Dahl and Aaron Wildavsky (Dahl & Lindblom, 1953, Lindblom, 1965; Wildavsky, 1979), who criticized both the exclusivity of linear rationality and the dissociation between politics and policy. Questioning the types of use of policy researches, particularly evaluations, Weiss (1972, 1979) goes further in the discussion about the meanings underlying such

studies, deepening the critique of the rational-empiricist tradition by highlighting the need for conscious action among analysts and bureaucrats.

The efforts of Tribe and Weiss point toward the beginning of the policy field reflexivity (**within** this very field). This reflexivity movement was responsible for pluralizing perspectives opposed to the analytical rationality of policy studies. Marking such a dispute, Martin Rein and Donald Schön (1977) write the work entitled "Problem setting in policy research", giving centrality to the rise of problems and to their value frameworks. They also criticize the notion advocated by Lasswell (1951), arguing that policy analysis cannot be focused on problems solution. For them (Rein & Schön, 1977), the main policy purpose does not lie in policy decision, but in the creative processes and in the ability to think reflexively in the course of action, imputing problems with learning and social emancipation dimensions.

The English political scientist Richard Rose (1976) also contributed to this movement, by discussing the difficult relationship between social scientists and policymakers made evident by the growing number of institutions mediating such groups of actors (i.e. think-tanks and other agencies). Using the metaphors of "disciplined research" and "undisciplined problems", the author identifies the limits of applied social research, reinforcing the gaps of uncertainty and complexity that keep the construction of problems and the design of policy solutions apart. In other words, it criticizes the reductionist approach of technical solutions intended to solve the problems of a society that cries out for greater participation in these problem-solving processes. Without disregarding political problems, Rose (1976) focuses his concerns on organizational problems and on how each group of actors perceives the other, pointing out the difficulties of social scientists in orienting their research findings for practical purposes, but encouraging policymakers to make their value frameworks even more explicit, associating it to deeper understanding of problems and to the building of alternative solutions, in terms of public policies. A way out of this impasse would be, precisely, to problematize value frameworks in which politics and policy operate.

Amidst these fruitful contributions, Frank Fischer (1980), an American political scientist who would become one of the main representatives of critical policy studies, definitively integrates the dimensions of politics, values and policy. Seizing upon the Habermasian critique of rational scientism, Fischer (1980) emphasizes the normative-evaluative dimension of the social process within knowledge constructions, arguing that public policies would be normative frameworks **in action**, loaded with values and with specific ways of seeing and conducting society, what refutes, once and for all, the neutrality thesis. For him, the strong obsession with this alleged neutrality was responsible for preventing policymakers from perceiving the inseparability between fact and value. Finally, he emphasizes that this perspective was far removed from what could already be called rational-empiricism, in an evident dispute for the initial emergence of the contradictions and interdicts of the field of policy studies. In some way, his work paves the way for the re-foundation of policy analysis and indicates that the space for criticizing the rational-empiricist tradition was politically given.

From criticism to the rational-empiricist tradition to interpretive and argumentative approaches

As soon as Habermas' first works were translated into English, they found great receptivity among authors who were looking for new paths into the field of policy studies, particularly in the United States (Fischer & Forester, 1987; Fischer, 1998). Between the 1960s and the 1970s, Habermas – who, at that time, already presented himself as the new great name of the Frankfurt School, under the influence of Marxism - built a consistent critique on the role of science, problematizing the limits of capitalism and presenting his concept of public sphere (Habermas, 1974). There is no doubt that Habermas' critical theory contributions were fundamental for the development of the rational-empiricist tradition critique. However, it was his concept of "public sphere" – as a locus of discussion and discourse construction – that most contributed to paving the way for a new approach, which assumed language centrality as the most important relational dimension among public actors. Thus, Habermas has brought significant contributions from the "linguistic turn" in philosophy (Wittgenstein, 1921/1968) to social theory, allowing its unfolding in the field of policy studies.

The oft-cited "linguistic turn", made popular by the works of Richard Rorty (1967), consisted of taking a fresh look at language. Understanding social relations as **texts,** the philosophers of the linguistic turn wished to draw attention to power-relations, and to social action modelling underlying their structures. Due to the advances of French structuralism, among other things, this enabled the problematization of deeper matrices of meaning – which, in turn, shapes more superficial matrices, the only ones visible by then. Habermas collaborated with this turn, by emphasizing the communicative dimension of language, particularly with regard to the design of a democratic social life (Habermas, 1986), built on the ideal standpoint. In choosing communicative rationality as this ideal, Habermas advocated an engaged science, differentiating communicative action (focused on the process of decision-making) from strategic action (focused on the product of decision-making), which gave greater emphasis to the normative-evaluative dimension as an organizer of the empirical one.

Brought to the field of policy studies, the linguistic turn allowed the recognition of new research materials, including **texts** and their analogues (Taylor, 1971), such as verbal and non-verbal communications during meetings, excerpts from political debates and speeches, policy evaluations, among others, triggering important methodological changes. All of this had directly influenced the development not only of new works, but also of new classifying categories, such as narrative, discursive, interpretative and argumentative - the latter two would be the ones to find more permanent and consistent developments in the field. Among the authors who began to explore the interpretation and the argumentation, in the 1980s, some stand out, namely Bruce Jennings (1983), John Forester (1987), Frank Fischer and John Forester (1987), Deborah Stone (1988), Mary Hawkesworth (1988) and Giandomenico Majone (1989).

Bruce Jennings was one of the first to bring the relation between interpretive social science and policy analysis to the field of policy studies. In his seminal chapter (Jennings, 1983), he defends the interpretive emphasis at the expense of the positivist dominance, which he already considered a turned page. Taking a new direction, he assumes that human behaviour, social relations and symbolic artefacts (language, acts, objects, ...) were also **texts** loaded with meanings, both for the agents that constitute them and for those who are located outside the context of its production.

Thus, it would no longer make sense to idealize a single model of policy analysis, as it would be the meanings that would model the sources of textual production into actions, intentions and conventions (as they would simultaneously be modelled by them). In his interpretive approach, Jennings (1983) proposes, therefore, the reorganization of important categories - such as contestability, insight, creativity, rhetoric and persuasion - and the discussion of the limits of social research, reorienting studies on the style and *ethos* of government-processes, as well as on the relations between social scientists, policymakers and citizens.

In his works, Jennings (1983) often refers to authors such as Jürgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt, Richard Bernstein and Carol Weiss, but also Anthony Giddens, Stephen Toulmin, Charles Taylor and Frank Fischer. Confident that the principles of logical positivism and empiricism were on the brink of collapse, he defended a new epistemological justification, one that not only emphasizes the differences between natural sciences and social sciences, but also points out alternative paths. At different times, he examines the extent to which the interpretative approach could represent this path, becoming a component of policy analysis – in a clear reflective stance in relation to the field. Jennings' interpretive approach (1983) was already echoing in the policy field, significantly broadening its scope, but when added to new contributions from critical theory, it earned increased relevance. For a twofold reason: the emphasis on the political dimension of policy analysis and on the crucial need for advisers and analysts 'democratic commitment.

In the book edited by John Forester (1987), "Critical Theory and Public Life", a varied set of essays written by different authors seek to explain how critical theory could (and should) be applied to questions of the so-called public life. The reference to Jürgen Habermas, who also signs one of the chapters, is made explicit throughout the text. The first important change, therefore, concerns a shift in assumption: new analysis materials (such as **texts** and practical actions) have been made liable, based on the understanding that the visible structures in social meanings are substantially built in the course of such discourses and actions. This new 'critical turn 'has altered even classic categories of analysis, such as "power", for example, which started to be understood as a set of structured relationships, in which diverse subjects, historically situated, build meanings and possibilities for action (Forester, 1987). In essence, Forester proposed a real reorganization of the policy field. Criticizing the dominance of rational choice theories and rational analysis, he advocated for the denaturalization of the very process of knowledge construction, including with regards to the use of language in policy analysis.

This upward movement of scholars interested in the interpretive perspective, was confirmed with the publication of a collection entitled "Confronting Values In Public Policy: the politics of criteria", edited by Fischer and Forester (1987). This was the first volume of a recognized annual series by Sage Publications, in partnership with the Policy Studies Organization, to deal with normative issues in policy processes, revealing that the field was opening new approaches and finding new ways forward. It was an achievement that brought together well-known names, including the organizers themselves, who discuss, in twelve chapters the new principles and practices in policy process and the professional perspectives of analysts, in addition to the application of new methodologies in case studies. Whereas the topics covered are the most varied, they all assume that the policy processes are permeated and modelled by values. Such values, when seen as normative structures, end up emphasizing their argumentative dimension (Fischer, 1980; Fischer & Forester, 1987), validating argumentation as an approach close to interpretation.

It is in this context that Jennings (1983) assumes interpretivism even more directly, repeatedly using expressions such as: "interpretative approach", "interpretive policy analysis", "interpretive social inquiry" and "interpretive policy analyst". These can be considered as the first steps to bring together, under the same "umbrella", the interpretive approach and authors who sought, in other traditions, the groundwork to oppose positivism and empiricism dominant positions in the field of policy studies. Furthermore, in his chapter, Jennings (1983) problematizes the role of the policy analyst and, concentrating on the epistemological and methodological bases of policy analysis, he compares three practical models: analysis as science, analysis as advocacy and analysis as advice, arguing that choosing one model over another has ethical and democratic implications. The author concludes with a broad argument in favour of the last model, as he understands it as a **text** that would be inserted in a broader set of texts, that is, of meanings produced by a set of subjects. For him, the interpretive policy analyst should assume the role of an advisor throughout the process, reinforcing the interpretive dimension of knowledge production itself, as well as the choices underlying these processes.

The 1980s also ended with two other important contributions to the policy field: "Policy Analysis and Political Argument", written by Deborah Stone (1988) and "Evidence, Argument and Persuasion in the Policy Process", by Giandomenico Majone (1989). Like the previous ones, both criticized the rationality project that engendered policy analysis and strongly emphasized the notion of argument as crucial for the early developments in the following decade, as an offspring of interpretation and argumentation. Stone (1988), using straightforward language, proposes an analysis model that, instead of demonizing the political dimension of the policy process, assumes it as its main creative dimension. For the author, policy processes are better modelled as political struggles for values and ideas, which is why it is in direct opposition to purely positivist analyses built on categories that, although supposedly neutral, impose an exclusionary point of view, including when it comes to its structure and the possibilities of participation of those who used to act under other rationalities. Thus, it reveals the relationship of mutual determination between the model of reasoning, the model of society and the policy-making model, and it does so strongly supported by the notion of "policy argument", an expression that comprises both the qualities of creativity and of strategy, in the tense dialogue of political dispute.

Also assuming argument as a fundamental unit of analysis, Majone (1989) – in addition to criticizing the technocratic model and to rejecting the idea of a technical-rational subject who makes rational decisions – intensifies the emphasis on the political and evaluative nature of the argument, defending it as a constituent element of democracy or, as he himself points out, of a "system of government by discussion" (p. 3). For him "public policy is made of words" (p. 35) and, whether in its written or oral form, the most fundamental piece, at all stages of the policy-making process and above all, is argumentation, since no policy problem is purely technical or purely political. Based on this, in addition to identifying the argumentative dimension of the policy analysis, he seeks to promote it in opposition to the decisionist conception that underlies instrumental rationality, both in terms of analysis and modelling. For him, "argumentation is the key process through which citizens and policy makers arrive at moral judgments and policy choices" (Majone, 1989, p. 8) regulated by specific rules and by institutionalized procedures or instruments and, in this sense, integrated into a more permeable policy process, such as persuasion.

Therefore, aligning with Majone (1989) means assuming that it is the argument that gives meaning and sense to all evidence, information and data used in the policy analysis. It also means agreeing that the public deliberation process always takes place within the scope of broader argumentation processes: different actors, based on their points of view, build individually and collectively persuasion and valuation architectures, which gradually reorganize themselves in public arenas of debate. Hence, Majone (1989) collaborates to ensure accuracy to the differences that would come to mark the subset of argumentation in the increasingly broad world of interpretative analysis. Majone's argument concerns interpretation, organized to reveal the power structures permeating language.

Essentially, from Majone (1989) it becomes possible to assume that advances in policy processes often depend on changing attitudes and values, as well as on accepting that such processes cannot be reduced to the commitment or to the objective of reaching consensus. At this point it was already clear that the fundamental unit of analysis in the policy field could no longer concern a narrow list of evidence – problematized in terms of objectivity and consequentiality -, but should be constructed in terms of values, subjectivity and judgment. This shift challenged both rigid/hermetic models and opened up the possibility of valuing a broader body of knowledge that, for a long time, was neglected or marginalized in policy analysis and planning. These new directions come close to what the critical Habermasian studies proposed, making room for what was to follow: the Critical Policy Studies.

The construction of "Critical Policy Studies" as a school of thought into the field of policy studies

Structure, contents and meanings in the field of policy studies were amplified by the great intellectual effervescence of the 1980s. Facing this new configuration, marked by growing concerns about the reorganization of boundaries and delimitations within the field itself, the notion of argument found a breeding ground in critical policy studies. This new agenda can be represented by the publication, in the 1990s, of a book entitled "The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning" (not yet translated into Portuguese), edited by Fischer and Forester (1993). Divided into three parts, this book brought together a plural but fine-tuned set of authors, among which we highlight, in addition to the editors themselves, Bruce Jennings, Martin Rein and Donald Schön, John Dryzek and William N. Dunn. This book acknowledges, as a whole, the centrality of political-normative arguments, which are situated in the deepest layers of meaning. It advocates the inseparability of facts and values, by giving special importance to the context or the situation in the sensemaking process. This would be one of the main contributions of a critical social science: orienting itself towards the problematization of normative frameworks and assumptions not yet examined, denaturalizing them. For this group, it was no longer enough to be interpretative. It was also necessary to be critical, which, at that moment, also meant being argumentative.

Fischer and Forester (1993) draw attention to the fact that the argumentative turn would lead scholars to critically study the policy process, observing the policymakers' proposals as truths that would only be legitimized in specific normative frames. In this sense, the policymaker could go from being just a prescriber to becoming part of a "multi-actoriality" (Boullosa, 2013, p. 74), by assuming the role of facilitators of debates, dialogues and learning processes or, still, of a councillor,

by involving themselves in broader argumentative and interpretive processes, fundamental to the collective (and democratic) construction of public policies. Thus, it was, above all, from the work of Fischer and Forester (1993) that the field of policy studies began to deal with the emergence of a new approach – that of the argumentative turn. Argumentation, interpretation and discursiveness began to trace, among themselves, their first boundaries, but still without finding a fourth, and broader, label that would be able to bring them together.

The first attempt to build a broader label, capable of harbouring these and other approaches, was offered by Frank Fischer, in 1998, in "Beyond Empiricism: policy inquiry in postpositivist perspective", his only article translated into Portuguese (Fischer, 2016a). In this article, in addition to denouncing the failure of Social Sciences in its task of solving the problems of contemporary society, the author also emphasizes that it is possible for scholars, policy analysts and policymakers to engage in post-positivist processes, beyond empiricism. Post-positivism is, therefore, described more as an epistemological orientation, contrary to the objectivist understanding of social reality than as a philosophy of science (Fischer, Miller & Sidney, 2007). Furthermore, by emphasizing that the facts carry with them socially constructed interpretations, Fischer (2016a) reinforces his criticism of technical rationality and proposes to integrate normative and empirical paths. For that, when he proposes interpretative methods for the policy studies, problematizes the crucial role of both power and argument in policy processes, through language, discourses and normative assumptions that permeate them.

In order to follow the new paths proposed by Frank Fischer, however, it is required significant epistemological, methodological and, especially, deontological changes, since the shift from positivism to post-positivism depends as much on the recognition of the setbacks of the positivist tradition regarding the role of science and on a change in scientists behaviour. Indeed, he insists on the importance of interpretation and argumentation, placing the argumentative turn within this post-positivist alternative (Fischer, 2016). He also examines the implications of this alternative way of doing science for the development of the field of public policy studies, defending a critical interpretation and signalling, definitively, the assumption of critical studies as a new school of studies in public policy. According to this new perspective, facts are transformed into research **choices** and scientific truths are transformed into scientific **interpretations**, directly linked to those who observe the object under analysis, how they observe it and from where they observe it.

In the years that followed, it became increasingly clear that critical policy studies, still in tune with interpretive policy studies, were already establishing themselves as an important school of thought for the field of policy studies. As part of this movement, in the first half of the 2000s, the idea of building institutional spaces to house such studies strongly emerged. The idea of a common agenda also came up, giving more density to this network of scholars already characterized by their numerous and strong connections. As a result, almost contemporaneously and, more or less, with the same actors, two important new spaces emerged: in 2006, the first major meeting of this research network was held in Birmingham, England, entitled Interpretive Policy Analysis Conference (IPA Conference); and, in the following year, the first issue of Critical Policy Analysis was published, a quarterly journal focused on critical policy studies, still active (online and in print).

These two new spaces, each in their own way, sought to consolidate critical studies and to mark their opposition to the rational-empiricist tradition in the field of policy studies. Even though the term "critical" does not appear in the title of the Conferences, it appeared in the general theme

of the first one, "The Interpretive Practitioner: From Critique to Practice in Public Policy Analysis", evidencing one of the most important issues that these audiences would face in the following years. The struggle to include the expression critical in the title was consistent with the concerns indicated by Fischer (2016b) about the assumption of "interpretivism" as a broader label than the label **critical**, since, for this author, it was the qualitative criticism that should work as a boundary of pure interpretivism. The journal, in turn, has already taken the critical label much more directly, bringing it not only to its title, but also to its first editorial and other texts, signed by names that, until today, remain strongly associated with the network of researchers who develop critical policy studies, with an emphasis on Frank Fischer, Dvora Yanow and Douglas Torgerson.

In the first issue of the Journal, Fischer's (2007b) article, "Policy Analysis in Critical Perspective: the epistemics of discursive practices", is the one that assumes, most directly, the label of critical studies most directly, while the others deal with interpretivism, discursiveness and reflexivity. Based on a review of the policy studies construction, as a field, the author focuses his criticisms on positivism, resuming from his 1998 work the importance of a post-positivist alternative. It is interesting to note that the criticality sought by him is very close to the critical conscience of Paulo Freire (1973), as well as the reflective attitude of the practitioner defended by Donald Schön (1983), in a scientific production process that should be assumed as a "learned conversation", a conversation focused on learning (Fischer, 2016) and a policy process that should be viewed as a process aiming at public clarification, according to Carol Weiss (1993). Bringing topics such as participation and deliberation to the table, Fischer (2007b) argues that these would only have a critical sense when related to the construction of democracy, uniting, therefore, learning processes and social emancipation.

Throughout the 2000s, a growing number of authors began to propose new frames of critical analysis, with broader possibilities for application. Such authors were already supported by a solid theoretical basis, oriented both to the positivist critique and to the critical theory anchorage, through language. In the first case, such studies were characterized by their high reflexivity potential in relation to the field, providing relevant gains, especially in method. In the second case, they assumed the method itself as an object of study, proposing new structures of critical analysis. David Howarth (2010), for example, joined this group by proposing a critical approach to the study of public policies, based on the concepts of power (under the strong influence of Michel Foucault), hegemony (based on Antonio Gramsci) and understanding discourses as articulatory practices (using Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Another illustrative effort of this intention to propose new methodological paths can be found in the work of Karen West (2012), for whom social practices should be adopted as the main material of analysis, understanding that this type of material would have greater adherence with post-positivism – concerned about a possible new Marxist turn in applied social sciences.

Still in 2012, in view of this fertile set of contributions, the book "The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice" (Fischer & Gottweis, 2012) was published, almost 20 years after the first book on the argumentative turn, considered an editorial success. In the new book, the critical perspective is more explicitly assumed, this time recognizing, alongside argumentation, reflexive discourse as yet another possible path for policy analysis. Although the relationship with argumentation remained strong, mainly due to the wide receptivity of The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning (Fischer & Forester, 1993) among scholars, the

texts gathered in 2012 recognize the importance of the "critical" label, to the point of dedicating the last part of the book to the debate on policy argumentation and critical theory. With this, the editors explain that, more than an adjective, the term **critical** represents a set of epistemo-methodological choices and, above all, a new scientific-analytical attitude. This new stance should assume both the non-neutrality of arguments and discourses that shape the policy processes and the greater centrality of reflexive action (or reflexive deliberation) - understanding reflexivity as the path for emancipation (Fischer, 2018). It is as if, to be critical, in terms of classification, it was necessary to be, in this order: interpretive in method, argumentative in materials and post-positivist in purposes.

The work edited by Fischer and Gottweis (2012) also stands out for the effort to bring new names to the debate, by attracting authors who were uncomfortable with approaches aligned with the rational-empiricist tradition or who did not see themselves as part of the field of policy studies, in order to incorporate emerging themes and approaches of the 21st century. To illustrate the first effort, we highlight Vivian Schmidt's (2008) endeavour to bring into critical policy research the proposal of a fourth type of institutionalism - a discursive one - based on the notions of idea (policies, programs or philosophy) and institutional discourse (communicative or of coordination) of institutions. This new type is seen by this author as part of an interpretive model that sees public policies as the result of interactive processes of argumentation, emphasising but also distinguishing its cognitive and normative dimensions. To illustrate the second effort, we highlight Mary Hawkesworth's text, who had previously reconstructed the history of feminist studies inside the policy studies field (Hawkesworth, 1994), but who went further to propose alternative forms of interpretation and (discursive) analysis of specific development policies, based on a post-positivist approach and methodology. The author sheds light on race, class and gender hierarchies and overrides the notions of neutrality, disembodied rationality and technical expertise.

In this way, efforts to define what is critical are gaining more and more traction, consolidating it as a **school of thought** that allows the investigation of the rhetorical and communicative strategies of the actors in policy processes. There are also evident methodological concerns regarding the scale of critical analyses, with strong suggestions that such analyses would be located on bridges to be built between the macro and micro levels – opening a way for the mezzo scale of policy analysis. In this sense, in 2015, Michael Farrelly published the book "Discourse and Democracy: Critical Analysis of the Language of Government", in which he identifies and discusses the gaps between the political discourses on democracy (on the macro scale) and the lived experiences of democracy (on the micro scale). Such questions are debated through speeches, political texts and a long case study in a city in the United Kingdom that proposed to "reinvigorate democracy" from a neoliberal perspective. Farrelly (2015) observed that implicit speeches, carried within policy instruments, were very different from their explicit content. With this, he enlarged the methodological paths for policy analysis, demonstrating the possibility of applying critical studies in longitudinal case studies.

As Michael Farrelly (2015), critical policy analysts continued to use instruments of method developed in the interpretive network, such as those advocated by Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (2006), but without considering themselves merely interpretive. The network of critical policy scholars, however, grew much more slowly than the interpretive one. Above all, because of the possibilities of expansion brought by the Interpretative Policy Analysis (IPA)

Conferences, sought to welcome works anchored in interpretivism and works based on qualitative instruments of analysis, even if such works had no strong relation with the critical perspective or approached the rational-empiricist tradition (Fischer, 2016b). The perception of this important difference of configuration between the critical and the interpretative networks ended up reinforcing the uniqueness of **what is critical**. Indeed, in the 2015 IPA Conference this issue emerged in the plenary, raising questions such as what does being critical mean and what are the reasons why one **should be** critical.

After deliberation by the editorial board of the CPS magazine, the answer to these questions came through the publication, in the first issue of 2016, of several texts by authors such as Kathrin Braun, Frank Fischer, Timothy W. Luke, David Howarth, Jason Glynos and Steven Griggs, Bob Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum. The answers all led to the idea that critical policy studies are distinguished by reflective examination of arguments, speeches, statements and actions in policy processes, problematizing them in their implicit and explicit normative frameworks, based on a multi-methodological framework – without excluding the empirical dimension, but placing it within the normative assumptions. In this case, reflexivity goes beyond the limits of the episteme, reaching deontology. Critical policy analysts are public actors who are implicated, even normatively, in the very processes they research. Committed to the construction of democracy and recognizing that language is a power structure, they reiterate that **whoever is critical** is attentive to changes in society, seeking to "discursively explore and interpret their meanings through processes of critical deliberation and argumentation" (Fischer, 2016b, p. 98).

This movement of reaffirming the internal and external limits of critical policy studies, even without being clearly concerned with identity affirmations within the field of policy studies, emerged at the same time as the publication of the work "Handbook of Critical Policy Studies". Of an encyclopaedic nature, rivalling the work "Handbook of Public Policy" (2006) and enhanced by the weight of an important publisher, Edward Elgar Pub, this can be considered as the definitive landmark in the consolidation of critical studies as a school of thought within the field of policy study. In addition to the editors, Frank Fischer, Douglas Torgerson, Anna Durnová and Michael Orsini (2016), who are also authors, this extensive book brings together contributions from 32 other scholars, among which we highlight: Vincent Dubois, David Howarth and Steven Griggs, Hendrik Wagenaar, H. Ingram, Raul Lejano and Sung Jin Park, Timothy W. Luke, Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça and Selen Ercan, in addition to Dvora Yanow. All of these authors are solidly aligned with the post-positivist critique in relation to the rationalist conception of knowledge (including its processes of problematization and the construction of solutions) and they all defend the critical understanding of policy processes in terms of interests, values and normative assumptions, considering that they would inform policy processes.

Currently, with these latest developments, critical studies - although little known and, consequently, little adopted in Brazil - are solidly established in the field of policy studies, probably constituting the main alternative to positivist-based studies. A consistent evidence has been the growing recognition of its importance into the general conformation of this field — good examples are institutional spaces created for critical studies within the International Public Policy Association (IPPA), with the opening of panels and specific topics to address this topic, within the scope of the International Conference on Public Policy (ICPP); but also the inclusion of representatives of critical studies in the editorial composition of the International Review of Public Policy (IRPP), as well as the

inclusion of specific courses in critical policy in IPPA's restricted catalogue of offers. At the same time, as it demonstrates its internal pluralism and the commitment to the democratic construction of the field, it also helps in the conformation of its interdictions, marking its position in relation to the political science – which, for the most part, still considers the study of public policies to be but one of its sub-areas.

These achievements were the result of a research agenda that, exploring its reflexive dimension, especially from the decade of 2010, channelled part of its efforts towards the insertion in the field of policy studies, expanding it. It was a gradual, consistent and historically constructed shift, based on a strong critique of the limits of the rational project of building society (Stone, 1988) – despite the criticality that may exist in Lasswell (Torgerson, 2019) – and the exhaustion of their possibilities for action on increasingly complex and transdisciplinary social problems (Fischer, 1998), but also in the search for deeper structures of argument (Majone, 1989), with their multiple rationalities (Hawkesworth, 1994), in which normative assumptions in dispute are based (Howarth, 2010), which need to be interpreted (Jennings, 1983) from a new instrumentality (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006), before which the critical analyst must develop a reflexive posture (Schön & Rein, 1994). The assumption of this reflective dimension has probably been the main guiding thread for the construction of an identity in critical policy studies, also functioning as a modelling dimension of democracy and, in turn, being modelled by it.

Conclusions

Although Critical policy studies are already consolidated as a school of thought in the policy field, they are only partially known and, consequently, very little employed in Brazil as a research field. In this article, we seek to reconstruct its trajectory of development, departing from what we call a "second image" of the field. To do so, we emphasize, on the one hand, its internal coherence – as a consequence of the reflexivity that is its characteristic –; and, on the other hand, we present some of the variations that emerged within it. In this sense, it is important to remember that these different approaches to critical policy studies share important singularities, which could be metaphorically represented as sides of the same triangle: in one perspective, they emerge from a consistent critique of **scientism**, which is closely related to the rational-empiricist tradition in policy analysis, particularly with regard to neutrality-obsession, instrumental rationality, the supremacy of specialized knowledge, the tendency to separate politics and policy and to an elitist model of liberal-technocratic democracy; in another, they all adopt language and communicative practices as important research materials. And, finally, they all foster multiple pathways of analysis, distancing themselves from the formal (and somewhat imprisoning) logic and moving closer to informal logics of practical reason, what Fischer (2016a) called reasoning-in-context. This triangulation reverberates in different research levels, highlighting gains in ontological, epistemological, analytical, methodological, empirical and, consequently, deontological terms. In this conclusion, we will present some of these gains, relating them to the Brazilian context, particularly with regard to public policy teaching.

In ontological and epistemological terms, we place the critique of the very nature of knowledge as the main benefit linked to this post-positivist perspective of policy analysis, particularly with regard to the correlation it promotes between **policy and politics**. Its importance

stems from the fact that this criticism is directly related to the deconstruction of thoughts and beliefs that have been, to a large extent, taken for granted since the birth of this field of studies, especially in Brazil. It is precisely this **denaturalization** that singles out the ontological dimension of critical policy studies and models the other dimensions, starting with the episteme, which assumes, as a new fundamental unit of analysis, the language embodied in communicative structures: of speech, narration, argument and value. At the deepest levels of analysis, those in which meanings, values and power structures become more evident, the transformative potential of critical policy studies also becomes greater both in terms of constituting objects of research (by recognizing new experiences and knowledges, ordinary or popular), as well as new grammars capable of modelling (and of being modelled by) new research paths.

These paths, in turn, unfold in at least three strong implications for research designing. The first, methodological, concerns the challenges of building an intermediate level, which might manage to relate the findings of a micro sociological look – focused on language and its structures – with macro-theories that, traditionally, seemed to sufficiently explain the policy processes. This entails, to a large extent, the need of renouncing mono-methodological perspectives in order to build interpretations and instruments that enable a critical look, as proposed. The second, theoretical, refers to the re-evaluation of the normative stance of the research, releasing it from prescriptive impositions which still prevails in the field of policy studies. It reorganizes, in turn, the empirical dimension, as its results are to be interpreted within specific value frameworks, requiring, again, a careful look at the normative premises of the analyses themselves. Finally, the third implication concerns the deontological level, that of the critical analyst, who ought to start seeing himself as part of the policy process, questioning his own value matrices. This **self-confrontation**, in terms of values, leads to a necessary and fundamental reflection on the role of the analyst and on the meanings of the analysis, in a reflexive movement that is of indispensable relevance to critical studies.

In this sense, critical policy studies may also offer, in Brazil, theoretical "shelter" to those policy analysts and researchers uncomfortable with conventional approaches, generally close to the rational-empiricist tradition (and its variations), and uneasy with predominantly quantitative and objectivist research results. These results are no longer sufficient: neither for explaining increasingly complex public problems (such as the growing inequalities that characterize Brazilian society, for example) nor for proposing alternative development models capable of including growing demands, such as those for participation and transversality. Faced with conventional policy analysis limits, especially in the Brazilian context, few researchers are resourcing to critical policy scholars, such as Raul Lejano, Frank Fischer, Donald Schön, Chris Argyris and Phillipe Zittoun. However, they still do it, in great measure, in an instrumental way, within very specific analysis frameworks, without necessarily unfolding criticality to other research levels. Consequently, they often end up not including reflexivity as an organizing element of their own professional practices or practices of research, one of the reasons why the field of policy studies unfortunately remains, particularly in Brazil, relatively narrow.

The lack of this **reflection-in-action** mind-set produces even more serious consequences in the context of professional training geared to policy analysts, since reflexivity is a necessary element to ensure that we continue thinking while we act in policy processes and it also is what allows past experiences to inform and transform future ones, enriching their quality. The development of such

criticality among policy analysts, however, depends on broader formative processes. In this sense, the extension of courses curricula and disciplines syllabuses of the so-called "public field" in Brazil – which includes public administration, public management, public policy, policy management, social work, social management, among others – could be even more built on plurality and multidisciplinarity, including, for instance, critical policy studies among its contents. Based on contacts with critical approaches throughout their formative experiences, policy analysts would acknowledge broader roles and responsibilities, including ethical ones. Instead of seeing themselves as rational decision-making subjects, in search of the most appropriate means to achieve a certain (and pre-established) end, or even as experts who provide "hard" data for politicians or policymakers, they would be able to consider themselves as relevant actors inserted in critical learning processes, in which they would assume the role of facilitators of dialogue; producers of arguments and evidence that support public debates; policy advisers, able to distinguish good from bad discursive constructions: the role of true political actors **in action**, shaping a multi-actoriality (Boullosa, 2014).

Aware of the transformative force of collective construction of knowledge and meaning and of its importance, we seek to disclose, throughout this article, how critical policy studies have definitely expanded the boundaries of the policy field. Although it was not the focus of this article, we eventually pointed out its importance for its own consolidation, given that scientific field constructions depends, to a large extent, on the existence of contradictory pressures (Bourdieu, 1966), made possible by a plural set of agents in motion in arenas of high density. Assuming the critical dimension of this task, our narrative, among other possible ones, sought – in theoretical, epistemological, thematic and even geographic terms – to highlight the processes of giving meaning to deeper language structures, in which underlies the understandings of democracy, power, hegemony and reflexivity. For that reason, we consider such diversity not only as desirable, but, as Majone (1989) recalls, also inevitable for the vitality of any society and any government that wishes to be governed by the free debate of ideas and that is committed to a democratic future where public experiences in the policy process can be considered as a public good. Critical policy studies, in their reflexivity, fully assume such challenges.

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