Research Article

Bridging Empirical Evidence and Diverse Epistemologies in Public Policy: Evidence-Based Policy and the Issue of Subjugated Knowledges

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This article explores the relationship between Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) and subjugated knowledges, addressing the need to integrate critical perspectives on science and include diverse knowledge in governmental decision-making. EBP, which promotes decisions informed by empirical evidence, faces criticism for its technocratic tendency and limited inclusion of the significant plurality of knowledge in territories. This paper suggests that the inclusion of subjugated knowledges (Foucault), defined as knowledge that is marginalized or considered inferior, can improve both the efficiency and the justice component of public policies. It proposes an approach that combines the empirical strengths of EBP, such as systematic reviews, meta-analyses and randomized controlled trials, as well as a professionalized public service with research capacities, complemented by an emphasis on including marginalized populations through participatory processes and qualitative research capable of recognizing the limitations and potential conflicts between different types of knowledge. By identifying and facilitating subjugated testimonial (visible and articulated) and hermeneutic (experiential, unidentifiable) knowledges, this study seeks to enrich the evidence base and pluralize interpretations of social reality, widening the repertoire of alternatives for communities. This approach, especially relevant for regions with low institutionalization of knowledge, such as the global South, aims to strengthen the capacity of governments to create more effective and inclusive policies, promoting processes of social reparations and epistemic justice.

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Introduction

From a certain perspective, every public policy decision is a creative and contingent act in the face of the complexity and uncertainty that surrounds the public sphere. The struggle to provide an empirical basis for reducing this uncertainty in government decisions from a so-called 'scientific' body has been a recurrent social demand for centuries. At the same time, in modern nation-state democracies, it has been the normative ideal (Weber, 2004 [1919]). Moreover, today, the establishment of a common truth or 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1977) is irremediably affected (not exclusively) by the scientific discourses that inform with reference to the 'real' (see Maturana, 1995, p. 11, 12), which are used to justify governmental decisions exercised over the territory and the communities that inhabit it. The social evolution of the scientific project, with its value neutrality, universal logic, empiricism, experimentation and reproducibility, seemed to be the ideal complement for generating the best possible decisions in governments (Laswell, 2018 [1938]). Although this full integration of government and science has not been realized in all corners of the globe, it is possible to observe a hegemonic trend toward the integration of this duo in political systems.

At the same time, there have been signals from different fronts (including poststructuralism, postmodernism, decoloniality, postdevelopment and feminisms), which call into question the universality of science and its existing limitations in representing the diversity of knowledge in communities (Foucault, 1977; Derrida, 1978; Lyotard, 1984; Rorty, 1989; Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2000; Esteva & Prakash, 1998; Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991; Keller, 1985; Longino, 2002). In this context, political positions attempting to advocate for a scientific foundation for governance and decision-making could benefit from revising their approach to address the range of critiques highlighting issues in the construction of scientific discourses and practices, as well as their implementation in public policy.

In this context, the present text addresses this issue by focusing on two specific points that allow us to advance this discussion: evidence-based policy (e.g., Cartwright & Hardie, 2012) and the question of "subjugated knowledges" (Foucault, 1980). A comparison of these allows us to relate two approaches that I believe can contribute to strengthening public administrations and governance in a pragmatic way while allowing the development of a critical approach to justice in the management of public decisions[1].

I first introduce a relatively recent academic body that advocates decision-making based on empirical facts and scientific considerations, "Evidence-Based Policy" (EBP). EBP emerged in the late 1990s in the United Kingdom, and this is the case:

> "An approach that advocates making policy decisions informed by the best available evidence, derived from a variety of sources, including scientific research and programme evaluations." (Nutley & Smith, 2000, p. 248)

This approach, which was at its height during Tony Blair's government, insisted, among other things, on institutionalizing processes of research and information management inside and outside the government, programme evaluation, and the inclusion of scientific bodies in decision-making (Nutley, Walter & Davies, 2007). This approach is of interest because it presents a practical and contemporary approach to reengineering public administrations and potentially better decision-making, including an empirical basis.

To contrast the EBP perspective and try to extend it using contemporary critiques of science, I will use the concept of subjugated knowledges (savoirs assujettis) (Foucault, 1992). Subjugated knowledges represent different kinds of knowledge of different social groups that suffer some kind of discrimination or subordination:

> "When I say 'subjugated knowledges,' I mean two things: on the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systematization. On the other hand, I also mean a whole series of knowledges that are disqualified as inadequate, naive, or inferior—those knowledges that are hierarchically below the required level of cognition or scientificity." (Foucault, 1980 [1976], pp. 81-82)".

This concept[2] helps to visualize that there is not only one type of knowledge in territories but also multiple types of knowledge, which are implicitly or explicitly hierarchized. This leads to a circumstance of knowledge subordination in which it is difficult for these to be utilized in public agora to determine the course of public decisions, which leads to a situation of epistemic and ontological exclusion of social groups, which in turn leads to an underutilization of the knowledge available in society. From this perspective, and in the context of EBP, community governments must address different kinds of knowledge, including scientific knowledge and a variety of knowledge that may or may not qualify as scientific, which are hierarchized and excluded through social and governmental

power mechanisms. In this text, I will try to emphasize the need for governance systems not only to generate mechanisms to ground decisions empirically but also to question the rationality and power behind the inclusion of decision criteria and to address the diversity of knowledge of territories. In this way, this text tries to exemplify how approaches to improving public administration can update and include the various critiques of scientific knowledge, especially those related to aspects of exclusion and epistemic diversity, which is especially relevant for different regions of the global South.

In this article, to unpack and exemplify the previously stated arguments, I theoretically and methodologically extend the discussion around strengthening public policy and governance apparatuses, emphasizing science and democracy. In terms of methods, I use a comparative and integrative literature review, critical analysis, and the development of a conceptual and interpretative framework. To do so, I address the aggregate literature on Evidence-Based Policy (EBP), primarily by comparing studies on this topic and drawing out the main lessons and critiques. Subsequently, I address subjugated knowledges. Due to the limited literature on the subject, I develop an interpretative framework for the purposes of this text from social epistemology, legal feminism and radical democracy. Finally, based on these interpretations, I suggest a way of complementing the EBP approach through this appreciation of subjugated knowledges. For this text, I use a critical realism approach in which I start from a realist ontology, where a real world is recognized independently of our perceptions and theories. However, from this perspective, our knowledge of the world is socially constructed and fallible. Moreover, it recognizes a pluralism of approaches, the importance of reflexivity in questioning interpretative constructions, and the emancipatory potential of science in revealing mechanisms that maintain social injustices (Bahskar, 2016; Sayer, 1997).

The article is organized as follows. In the first section, I introduce the literature and theory related to the importance of an empirical basis in governance, starting with general approaches and moving toward 'Evidence-Based Policy (EBP)', and in the second section, I unpack the issue of 'subjugated knowledge'. This will lead to further analysis and discussion of complementarities between the perspectives and possible applications in public policy.

1. The big picture

Government apparatuses in a democracy base their decisions on discourses (or arguments) that they assume to be true. With these discourses, they explain and represent a common reality over which

they exercise a decision. The construction of such discourses is substantiated in different ways, usually by appealing to the reason that underpins our true arguments:

> "In effect, we say that whoever does not yield to reason, that is, whoever does not yield to our rational arguments, is arbitrary, illogical or absurd, and we implicitly affirm that we have a privileged access to reality that makes our arguments objectively valid" (Maturana, 1997, p. 12).

In this way, and taken to a political context, the definition of what is considered true, i.e., what adequately represents social reality, is decisive in justifying different courses of action that are possible in government decisions. Likewise, courses of action that do not correspond to our basis of information and rational argumentation can be rejected or marginalized under a variety of explanations. Therefore, in democracies, political processes for discerning what constitutes an argument that properly represents reality, or "truth," are fundamental.

In this context, the processing and intelligibility of available information are decisive in generating the discursive syntheses considered 'true' that determine government decisions. However, multiple problems arise at this point. On the one hand, the information we have about our contexts is limited and difficult to aggregate and process. On the other hand, as people, we have cognitive-biological limitations in making such information intelligible, as emphasized by Bateson (2000 [1972]) and Simon (1957):

> "the capacities of the human mind to formulate and solve complex problems are very small compared to the size of the problems whose solution is required by objectively rational behavior in the real world—or even for a reasonable approximation to such objective rationality". (Simon, 1957, p. 198)

Faced with this inherent limitation of our biologies, to live and decide in human groups, we make use of interpretations (discourses) about the world in search of reducing uncertainty or risk (Beck, 2009) in our collective decisions. In this sense, the establishment of 'true' political discourses encompasses the complex nature of social, economic, and environmental issues, which can be embedded and combined in various manners. In Western democracies, at least two mechanisms can be identified in this process for determining 'true' interpretation and discourses: (x) social demand and (y) empirical (scientific) measurement.

The degree of emphasis on different methods of discourse production and aggregation (social demand and/or empirical measurement) leads to different policy alternatives. An emphasis on (x) social demand leads to a mode of aggregating and processing information and interpretations with greater democratic production and control, which, as I will insist later, may be ideal in multiple fields in the long run. In section 3 (subjugated knowledges) Subjugated Knowledge), I present the relevance of 'subjugated knowledges' and elaborate further on (x) social demand. This study has at least two limitations. On the one hand, we find widespread depoliticization in many parts of the world (largely due to the bureaucratic hijacking of many public aspects). On the other hand, it is challenging to quantify publicly in numerous fields, such as specialized information and larger quantities.

In this context, we enter the type of approach that underlies this text, the emphasis on (y) empirical (scientific) measurement. In this context, the emphasis moves to creating 'true' discourses based on as much information as possible, focusing on generating more information and improving the processing of that information. In its ideal mode, here, we find a scientific and technocratic government with a professional career system that makes its decision-making rationale transparent in the protocol, which citizens can access and question the interpretation on an empiricist basis. In this context, progress has been made in building capacities within the government in the measurement and processing of information, generating institutional protocols that are regularly reviewed and improved.

In practice, the two approaches mentioned above (x-social demand and y-empirical measurement) can be complemented, and there are countless ways of designing between them. However, one constant remains, which is that governments tend to aspire to generate a knowledge base that informs the discourses that will be judged as 'true' to justify and make public decisions, which can be addressed at least by (x) paying attention to the participatory deficit (social demand) and (y) strengthening the empirical basis on which decisions are made (empirical measurement).

2. Evidence-Based Policy

In the context of the above discussion, Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) is a perspective that strengthens the empirical or scientific bases on which the discourses that lead to decision-making are constructed. Although, in principle, it does not ignore the participatory-democratic deficit (Wells, 2007), it does not delve (theoretically) into issues of empirical basis from participatory, deliberative, agonistic or radical democracy. Instead, EBP presents a structured and practical approach to information and

evidence management in government that leads to actionable changes, which can result in improved public administration in the short term.

EBP have antecedents in social science movements that seek to generate quantitative and experimental evidence for more reliable government decisions (e.g., Campbell, 1969). It has been argued that EBP was derived from the Evidence-Based Medicine movement of the 1970s (Cochrane, 1972), which emphasized justified effectiveness in medical interventions based on systematic reviews, meta-analyses (analysis of analyses) and randomized control trials (Oliver et al., 2014).

In turn, in this academic body, two foundational arguments have been emphasized. On the one hand, researchers and decision makers are guided by different principles and practices. On the other hand, we find the argument for extending the type of evidence used in government influenced mainly by Carol Weiss' typology, which shows different methods by which research and evidence can affect public policy and government (Weiss, 1979; Weiss, 1998). In this sense, Weiss (1979, 1998) identified different types of use of research in policy, namely, (1) 'instrumental use' by directly applying research findings to make decisions or solve problems; (2) 'conceptual use' that affects understanding and perception of the problem rather than immediate action; (3) 'symbolic or political use' to justify or legitimize a position or decision already taken; (4) 'processual use' to justify or legitimize a position or decision already made; (4) 'procedural use', influencing decision makers in their judgments by participation in the research process rather than by research results; and finally (5) 'imposed use', which occurs when the use of evidence or results is suggested or compelled by regulations or a third party power, such as regulations to apply for funding or some other such circumstance.

These two foundational perspectives, (a) differentiated practices between decision makers and researchers and (b) Weiss's typology, resulted in at least two alternatives: continuing with an indirect (enhanced) use or toward closing the gap and promoting the direct (linear) use of research in public policy (Oliver et al., 2014).

The EBP emerged in this context, influenced not only by academic bodies but also by UK policy actors such as David Blunkett (Secretary) and Tony Blair (Prime Minister), who came to the government in 1997 and focused on 'what works' in social policy. Additionally, the establishment of the Centre for Evidence-Based Policy in Oxford in 1996 and the Campbell Collaboration, which transferred research methods from the Cochrane Library and was founded in 2000, are essential contributors (Head, 2010). The EBP had heyday in the 1990s and 2000s. However, it also expanded to the World Bank and the

OECD, and even during the Obama administration, it was notorious that influencing the mandate to strengthen the evidence used in the Office of Management and Budget (Ibid.).

The EBP approach is initially similar to its predecessors, who sought to promote a more direct (linear) use of research in public policy, promoting the rigorous use of empirical data to promote rationality, efficiency, and continuous improvement. It also borrows from health research methodologies, systematic reviews, meta-analyses and randomized controlled trials (Nutley, Walter & Davies, 2007). Systematic reviews, broadly speaking, consist of compiling and analyzing different relevant research (usually with different methodologies) on a topic. Meta-analysis, common for approving medicines and others, is a statistical technique for combining results from multiple studies. Randomized controlled trials consist of measuring and evaluating a programme or intervention using a group of participants (recipients) against a control group that does not participate. This approach is also applied and complemented by scientific research sources, administrative and statistical data, and expert studies and opinions. In this context, a strong emphasis emerged that the government should invest funds in measuring, producing and processing knowledge (Pawson, 2006).

Although the EBP approach has not become a single, rigid approach and has flexibility in application in different fields, such as health, social policy, and infrastructure (Head, 2010), it has led to criticisms of the reliance on randomized controlled trials and the direct use of previous peer-reviewed research (Oliver et al., 2014; Cartwright & Hardie, 2012). On the other hand, other criticisms arose based on the marginalization of case studies and on ethnographic, historical and qualitatively diverse methodologies (Oliver et al., 2014). These factors helped move the development of the project toward more inclusive and interdisciplinary views, such as the establishment of the UK Behavioral Insights Team in 2010, which informed the government by using perspectives from psychology and behavioral science to understand decision-making processes within the government (Halpern & Nesterak, 2014).

Other criticisms pointed to difficulties in adapting EBP to local contexts; capacity constraints in local governments; difficulties in translating results across different social, economic and cultural contexts; and distancing from justice considerations (Cartwright & Hardie, 2012). In this context, the importance of identifying specific causal aspects in each context that make public policy work (horizontal) and aspects that need to be transformed to work in another context (vertical) has been noted (Ibid.). Similarly, literature reviews have found other limitations concerning cultural and accessibility difficulties in using information, controversies around what constitutes valid evidence, and robust evidence showing that evidence leads to better decisions (Oliver et al., 2014; Innvaer et al.,

2002). This has led to an insistence on pluralistic approaches to evidence that recognize different types of knowledge and methods, iterative processes of continuous learning and adaptation, capacity building and institutionalizing processes within government for the use of evidence, and consolidating spaces for collaboration between academia and government (Oliver et al., 2014).

While this approach has several limitations, it also has many points that remain valid for different governance systems that aspire to consolidate empirically based decisions. By examining this experience and learning about its limitations and difficulties, it is possible to produce new interpretations for contexts other than the one in which EBP was originally formulated. For the purposes of this study, I present the following points as a possible interpretation of a contemporary approach to EBP, primarily intended for regions of the world with low institutionalization of knowledge management, such as low- and middle-income countries.

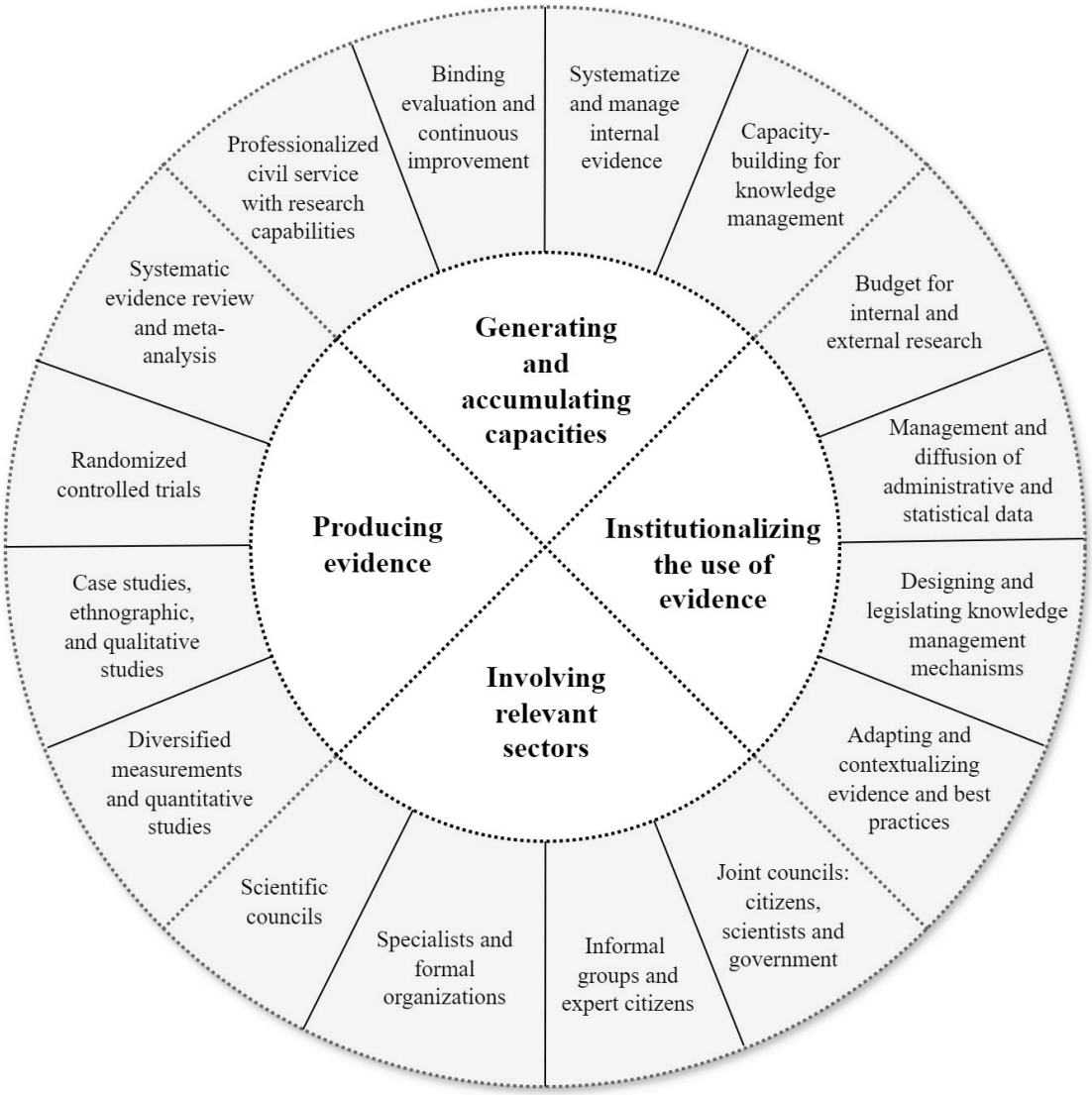

Figure 1. *Summary of lessons learned on 'Evidence-Based Policy', two decades later*Source: Own elaboration.

In this context, four dimensions are identifiable that bring together different elements: (a) producing evidence, (b) institutionalizing the use of evidence, (c) generating and accumulating capacities, and (d) involving relevant sectors. As (a) 'evidence production', this study emphasizes the importance of increasing the evidence base through which governments operate and incorporates systematic reviews of existing evidence and multianalysis (or meta-analysis), randomized controlled trials and the expansion and diversification of quantitative studies, which are typical of the first wave of EBP.

This list includes case studies and ethnographic and qualitative studies as part of second-wave critiques of approaches (Cartwright & Hardie, 2012).

Within (b), "institutionalizing the use of evidence", different components are included to promote and manage knowledge. Among others, the importance of budgets to promote research both outside and within government is noted, including funding applied research in public policy and allocating budgets to produce information within the government apparatus. Also included in this field is the management and dissemination of data for general use, as well as generating platforms and others that facilitate data use both within and outside the government. It also includes regulating mechanisms to promote and standardize practices to encourage the production and management of knowledge within the government and for public policies. Finally, in response to the criticisms of the second wave of EBP studies, emphasis should be placed on generating knowledge about local contexts to adapt best practices, increase the likelihood of success and reduce public policy externalities.

The point "generating and accumulating capacities" refers to generating a government apparatus capable of working with evidence and producing and managing different types of knowledge. In this sense, the importance of the professionalization of public servants is underlined, whether through civil service or other mechanisms that ensure the accumulation of research and knowledge management capacities within the government apparatus. On the other hand, the importance of deepening and diversifying evaluation practices for continuous improvement has been noted, which has already been urged on multiple fronts (Merino, 2014). It also includes the documentation, systematization and management of evidence within the government apparatus to improve public management and produce public policies.

Regarding point (d), "involving relevant sectors", the importance of incorporating all sectors with empirical knowledge on an issue and strengthening strategic sectors that can produce policy-relevant knowledge is presented. In this sense, the most apparent sectors are the scientific sectors, universities and specialized researchers, either independently or as a council. On the other hand, as some critiques of the EBP (Head, 2010; Cartwright & Hardie, 2012) have pointed out, it is also essential to include different sectors of citizens with varying degrees of expertise, individuals or formal or informal groups. Similarly, councils can be included where citizens with relevant expertise and specialized sectors are included. On this last point, the following discussion on subjugated knowledge becomes relevant.

Up to this point, I have primarily presented EBP as a mechanism for strengthening the empirical basis for government decisions. Returning to the initial discussion (in section 1. The big picture), such an approach can be included within the (y) 'empirical measurement' types (and) for interpreting social reality and determining the 'true' discourses that inform government decisions. The EBP tried to distance itself from political controversies, basing its approach on a rational perspective and aspiring to a certain neutrality. However, several second-wave studies (Cartwright & Hardie, 2012; Oliver et al., 2014) have noted the difficulties of separating ethical and political considerations in practice, as well as the multiple ways of interpreting the same evidence. Therefore, the political component, these authors suggested, should be deepened, and thus, they should recognize that evidence alone, while crucial, is insufficient for better decision-making. Likewise, the EBP has been sustained by a technocratic vision of public service, which assumes that professionals are better able to decide for populations, leading to a centralization of decisions, which has been criticized from a democratic perspective under the argument of representativeness and depoliticization, limiting social learning about the public, and its multiple implications (Dewey, 2012 [1946]). In this context, considerations of (x)'social demand', as production and aggregation of discourses and attention to the participatory deficit in decision-making, become relevant, returning to a broader consideration of not only the knowledge base with which decisions are made but also the rationality through which social reality is interpreted, as well as ethical and justice considerations about the role of decisions to include, represent and serve the different populations of a territory.

3. Subjugated knowledge

As I presented previously, social (x) demand is a mode of producing and aggregating 'true' discourses in which there is greater democratic production and control. Social demand, in this context, can be understood as a mode of aggregating and processing information through the participation of different social groups in the determination of public agendas. It can play a central role within democracies, especially in direct or participatory democracies, in the process of formulating and selecting 'true' discourses that guide decision-making. Some deep interpretations of radical democracy or pragmatism would insist on (x) 'social demand' as an ideal, deepening citizen participation in different aspects of public affairs so that diverse information and perspectives can be included and, in turn, generate learning for collective decision-making, leading, ideally, to an increase in creative capacity in the generation of alternatives and thus greater social control over the

future of society. John Dewey, for example, insisted on involving citizens as much as possible, as opposed to technocrats and experts, on the one hand, as crucial sources of information and, on the other hand, to develop a type of social intelligence to govern our communities in a better way (Dewey, 2012 [1946]). In another relevant argument, from deliberative democracy, Habermas (1984) argued for the importance of including as much knowledge and social perspectives as possible to achieve a better synthesis and to be able to make truly consensual and rational decisions that benefit society equality. For example, Habermas highlighted the theoretical concept of the "ideal speech situation", pointing to an ideal circumstance in which different social groups can include their knowledge and ideas in public agora so that power, immersed in all social relations, can be identified (and named) and avoid distorting the discourses of different people, which leads to excluding their participation and thereby moving toward a better synthesis of social reality and leading to decisions with less social impact and benefiting more people (Habermas, 1984). These approaches exemplify the rationality of the production and aggregation of 'true' discourses from (x) social demand, where the empirical and interpretative basis of reality is largely determined by individuals and communities, aspiring to greater social control and involving diverse rationalities in the way information and knowledge are selected and interpreted for decision-making.

This interpretation, in which I contrast (x) social demand with (y) empirical and scientific measurement, which primarily underpins EBP, would seem to make the normative origin for the determination of 'true' discourses contradictory. Here, however, I will point out that arguments from (x) social demand can contribute to overcoming some limitations and expanding the transformative capacity of perspectives based on (y) empirical measurements, specifically EBP in this case. In turn, these (x) social demand perspectives may help to address some recent criticisms of the scientific project to represent the diversity of knowledge and ways of life[3] As I mentioned, I use the concept of 'subjugated knowledges' to unpack this comparison and discussion in this context to narrow down the discussion.

As I presented in the introduction, subjugated knowledges refers to knowledge that has been marginalized or qualified as inferior, less scientific or incapable of defining reality (Foucault, 1992 [1971]). A possible agenda of (x) social demand based on justice would be to argue for the recognition and inclusion of such excluded knowledge. In this way, this reflection implies rethinking the way in which we dispose and process evidence for public policy, as it questions the hegemony of scientific

discourses (as privileged discourses) and, in turn, recognizes the epistemic and ontological diversity of territories.

To advance this discussion from (x) social demand, I address the issue of subjugated knowledge to complement and compare to the EBP perspective, highlighting two dimensions that can contribute to strengthening: (1) effectiveness and (2) justice. As for (1) effectiveness, I argue that evidence-based decisions (EBP in this case) can be enhanced by considering subjugated knowledge by including information and knowledge that have been marginalized. The increased availability of knowledge could help increase the empirical basis of decisions. Moreover, the social involvement of people in different social positions could contribute to strengthening the creative process of public policy, i.e., the interpretation of evidence and the generation of possible decisions for communities. In this sense, this approach can also contribute to imagining and designing policy alternatives where diverse social positions can exist. Second, related to the previous one, as (2) justice, I argue that a process of reflection and inclusion of subjugated knowledge can contribute to making visible and analyzing current circumstances of exclusion and historical processes of alienation and violence of social groups. This could lead to processes of social reparation and prevention of further forms of marginalization. This point addresses the ethical and political component of EBP.

In this section, I will present some interpretative and practical ways of addressing subjugated knowledge to contribute to effectiveness and justice in Evidence-Based Policy processes. To inform this approach, I will draw on concepts from the literature on social epistemology, legal feminism, and radical democracy.

3.1. Recognizing subjugated knowledge

A first approach to subjugated knowledges would involve knowing how to recognize subjugated knowledges. In this context, among the various strategies that can be devised to identify subjugated knowledges, I suggest that the intersectional categories of legal feminisms developed from the work of Crenshaw (1989) can be useful first steps for practical identification and wide recognition. Specifically, the work of Patricia Collins (1990), in which she identifies intersecting categories of systems of oppression (developed in her matrix of domination), may be useful for exemplifying positional categories of subjugated knowledge and their possible interconnections. In this sense, Collins (1990) identifies several key categories for identifying privilege and oppression: race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, ethnicity, age, ability/disability, religion, geography, and culture. To which

can be added others, such as belonging to majority groups, language, education, appearance, fertility, etc. (Morgan, 2018)[4]. In this sense, investigating and recognizing subjugated knowledges would require disaggregating these categories and devising practical mechanisms for identifying them. Likewise, approaching groups that suffer intersections in these categories (simultaneous oppressions) is implied as an explicit effort to create bridges for their involvement in defining the public. For space reasons, it is not possible to elaborate on such mechanisms. However, it is worth noting that their design is crucial and, ideally, should be generated in plural and inclusive contexts. Different actors in councils with plural representation, civil society organisations dedicated to marginalized groups, and specialized social science centers can contribute to the design of such processes.

3.2. Subjugated knowledges: testimonial and hermeneutical

A second issue of importance for working with subjugated knowledges would involve identifying their fundamental characteristics. For this purpose, I will draw on Miranda Fricker's (2007) work on 'epistemic injustice' in the field of social epistemology to visualize different ways in which subjugated knowledges can exist.

One approach to subjugated knowledge can be based on recognizing two forms of exclusion or injustice to knowledge: testimonial and hermeneutic. As 'testimonial injustice', Fricker refers to when someone's knowledge is discredited or rejected through prejudice, i.e., based on aspects of social identity (e.g., gender, ethnicity, social class, etc.), or what Fricker calls 'prejudicial stereotypes' (2007). Within testimonial subjugated knowledges we can identify, for example, discrediting the claim of a certain indigenous person about the destruction of nature, referring to it as 'mother' or 'god', based on a prejudice about indigenous people based on 'ignorance' or some other attribute related to ethnicity, rurality, poverty, etc.

On the other hand, 'hermeneutic injustice' occurs when someone's experiences are excluded from the prevailing collective understanding (Fricker, 2007). This happens when there is an inability or lack of collective interpretative resources to make sense of the social experiences of some social groups. This mainly affects social groups that are not recognized or understood by the dominant culture (e.g., indigenous people, women, children, minorities, people with disabilities or homeless people). In this way, structural prejudice makes the experiences of marginalized groups incomprehensible or hidden. For example, forms of discrimination or disqualification of indigenous peoples' languages were not recognized as relevant until recent years, as they were not articulated in the language of the dominant

groups, even though social groups speaking indigenous languages experienced (and experience) multiple forms of discrimination and inferiorization (sometimes people from the same groups cannot articulate such a situation). In this sense, hermeneutic subjugated knowledges are hidden or unarticulated, whereas testimonial knowledges may be available and articulated.

In the context of this discussion, testimonial subjugated knowledges can be more easily identified than hermeneutic knowledge, as an explicit effort can be made to try to identify marginalization and prejudice. In this sense, hermeneutic subjugated knowledges are more difficult to identify and may or may not be associated with the same oppressions surrounding testimonial knowledge. However, hermeneutic subjugated knowledges, being hidden and unelaborated, require social circumstances and individual and collective reflexive processes to be identified.

In the context of the discussion at hand, I consider it important to differentiate between testimonial and hermeneutic subjugated knowledges in order to better understand the processes of identification, along with their intersectional dimensions. Subjugated knowledge commonly suffer from forms of violence that make it difficult to see, express, or articulate them. Therefore, identifying these processes is necessary.

3.3. Acknowledging subjugated knowledge

Subjugated testimonial and hermeneutical knowledges, as I have argued, require different treatment. In practical terms, testimonial examples can be identified and described. In contrast, hermeneutics are hidden in the same or other oppressions as testimonial ones, so it may be necessary to have different approaches to such subjugated knowledges. While I cannot delve into detail in this text, at least two forms may be key to facilitating their use: (1) practical deliberative interfaces and (2) explicit facilitation or research efforts. Practical deliberative interfaces refer to spaces where citizens can participate safely and with real objectives, allowing for reflection and self and collective recognition. In (1) practical deliberative interfaces, subjugated, testimonial (articulated) knowledge can find spaces to be exposed. Space and circumstances can be designed to offer different perspectives and counterbalance dominant positions, making it possible to present and integrate such knowledge in decision-making contexts. Examples of practical deliberative interfaces may include assemblies, participatory forums, participatory budgeting, councils, etc. On the other hand, (2) explicit facilitation or research efforts can contribute primarily to hermeneutic (or unarticulated and unseen) knowledges, helping to formulate and what kinds of knowledges are not participating in decision-

making processes or analyzing and learning socially about the reasons why they are not present. Explicit efforts can also be useful for testimonial knowledges that do not participate because of power effects (e.g., fear of being reprimanded or affected by other groups). Examples of explicit facilitation or research efforts may include various types of social and participatory research (including funding), focus groups, reflection forums, informal partnerships, etc.

3.4. Dealing with subjugated knowledge

In this context, and for the current discussion. An argument of (x) social demand based on justice could advocate for the inclusion of different marginalized intersectional positions, visible and articulated (testimonial) or not (hermeneutic), using mechanisms of participation and inclusion. These would contribute to the plural construction of 'true' arguments to justify government decisions. However, there are multiple problems related to (y) empirical measurement arguments and approaches such as the EBP.

Dealing with subjugated knowledges can occur multiple times and in multiple ways. However, it is important to recognize how these interact with other types of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, with which they do not necessarily coincide. At this point, building on extended discussions of radical democracy (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014; Habermas, 1998), I suggest that at least three types of interactions can be identified in the interactions between subjugated knowledges and dominant (including scientific) knowledge: aggregatable, consensual and contestable or agonistic. As (1) aggregatable, we can find those knowledges that can be included in other knowledges without hindrance, including data or information (e.g., information about the physical characteristics of a neighborhood in a city or information about difficulties encountered by a marginalized group). As (2) consensual, we find those that can be deliberate and lead to consensus (e.g., the recognition of cultural value of some physical space or object or the allocation of resources for mitigation measures for a specific suffering of a marginalized group in a context of limited budget); and (3) contestable or agonistic, those knowledges that are not compatible with mainstream or scientific knowledge (e.g., a vision of development without natural resource extraction, which contradicts the material production of other lifestyles, or the vision of nature as a divine entity).

In practice, the interactions between knowledge items (aggregable, consensual and contestable) can move between categories. It may be helpful to recognize that each of these three circumstances requires different treatments. While it is beyond the scope of this text, it is worth noting that while

aggregatable and consensual require some effort. The contestable (or agonistic) ones have multiple challenges in modern democracies to be implemented, as they require deeper, contextually appropriate and sometimes prolonged treatment. This treatment could draw from different disciplines, particularly peace and conflict studies.

To summarize the above, I present the following diagram and discuss how EBP can integrate subjugated knowledges.

doi.org/10.32388/07SYNE

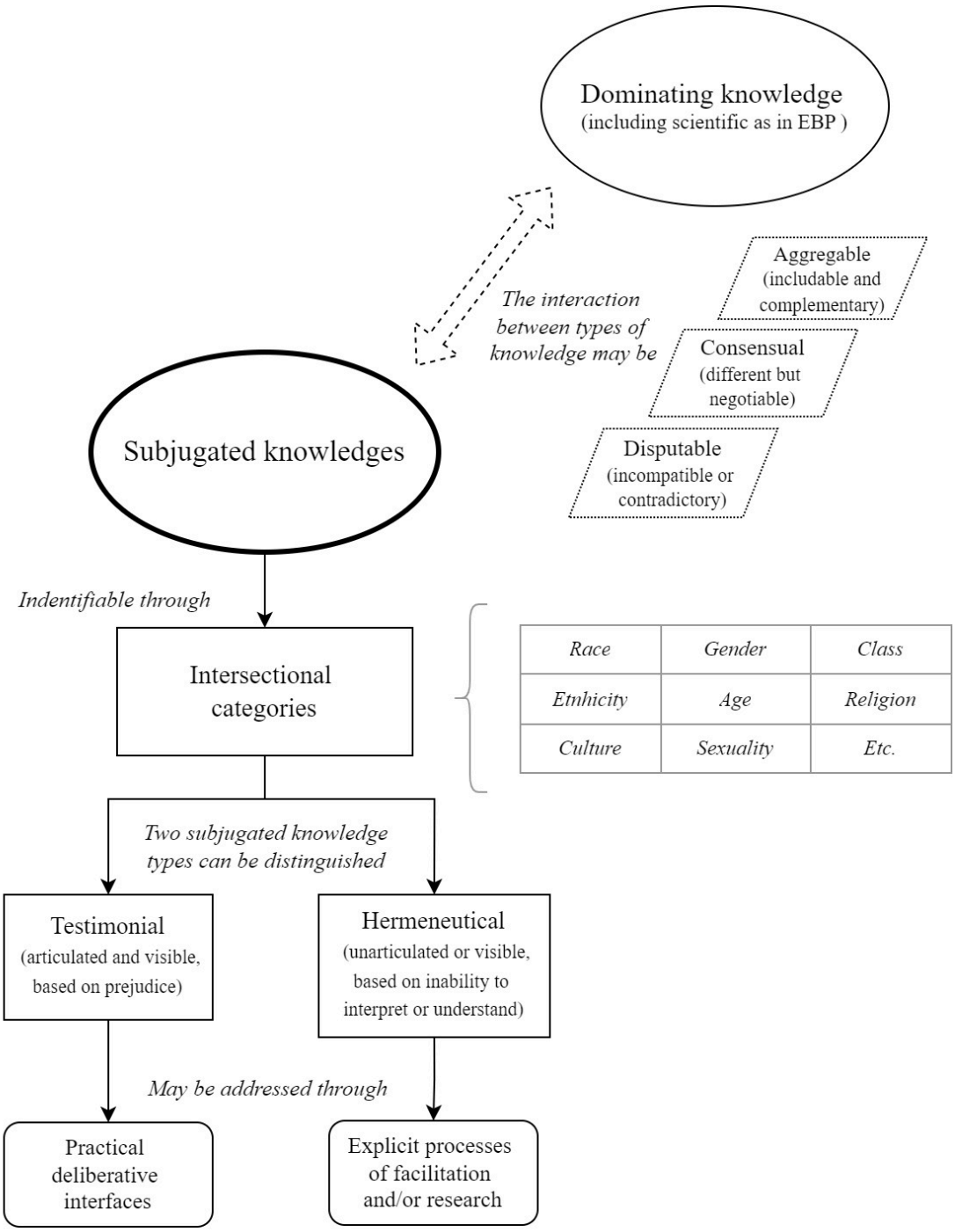

Figure 2. *A pragmatic interpretation of subjugated knowledges for public policy*

Source: Own elaboration.

doi.org/10.32388/07SYNE

4. Integrating evidence-based knowledge into evidence-based policy (EBP)

To finalize this text, I will briefly point out an alternative by which the EBP approach can include subjugated knowledges and some implications. The four dimensions of EBP synthesis were used (Figure 1). I will develop this normative approach.

In the context of "producing evidence", the EBP approach could initially include subjugated testimonials and hermeneutic knowledge through qualitative research on marginalized groups and their perceptions. However, possibly more fruitful research through participatory processes through reflection on social reality would be more fruitful. Through spaces of interaction and participatory research, participants can not only provide valuable information and insights for public decisions (testimonial), but also improve the social understanding of forms of exclusion and violence against groups, which in turn can help to formulate the plight of marginalized groups (hermeneutic) and devise mechanisms for solutions and social reparations.

Second, concerning "generating and accumulating capacities", it is desirable that capacities for social research and participatory management be developed within the government and within other institutions, such as universities, research centers and civil society organisations. Such knowledge is not readily available in all territories, and dealing with marginalized populations requires specific skills such as intercultural management, group psychology, participatory research, and other social work methods. Similarly, as has been highlighted, it is not enough to know how to include and deal with subjugated knowledge of a testimonial type (visible and articulated) but to create and facilitate deeper transformative processes that inquire into the nature of exclusion (hermeneutic) and bring to light alternatives of societies that care for their members.

Regarding "engaging relevant sectors", the EBP approach may benefit from using an intersectional approach (using categories such as race, gender, class, religion, etc.) to identify underrepresented and marginalized populations in participatory spaces for both generating and managing evidence. Similarly, involving marginalized populations through carefully formulated participatory processes can contribute to interpreting evidence in different ways, helping to pluralize evidence. On the other hand, involving marginalized groups in the design of solutions and alternatives can contribute to diversifying the possibilities for solutions and producing more inclusive policies.

Finally, regarding "institutionalizing the use of evidence", to strengthen a subjugated knowledge approach in EBP, it is necessary to operationalize in institutions, as mentioned in the three previous points. This would require budgeting for capacity building, research and participatory management within and outside the government, i.e., for government agents as well as for external institutions and organisations (universities, civil society organisations, informal associations, etc.). Second, it is necessary to design, institutionalize and legislate mechanisms that contemplate the inclusion of subjugated knowledge within public management and in the formulation of public policies. While the term ‘subjugated knowledges’ may not be useful for practical use, other appropriate concepts related to epistemic marginalization or epistemic injustice can be devised for specific governance contexts.

This perspective can be summarized in the following graph (Graph 3), which complements the previous graph (Graph 1).

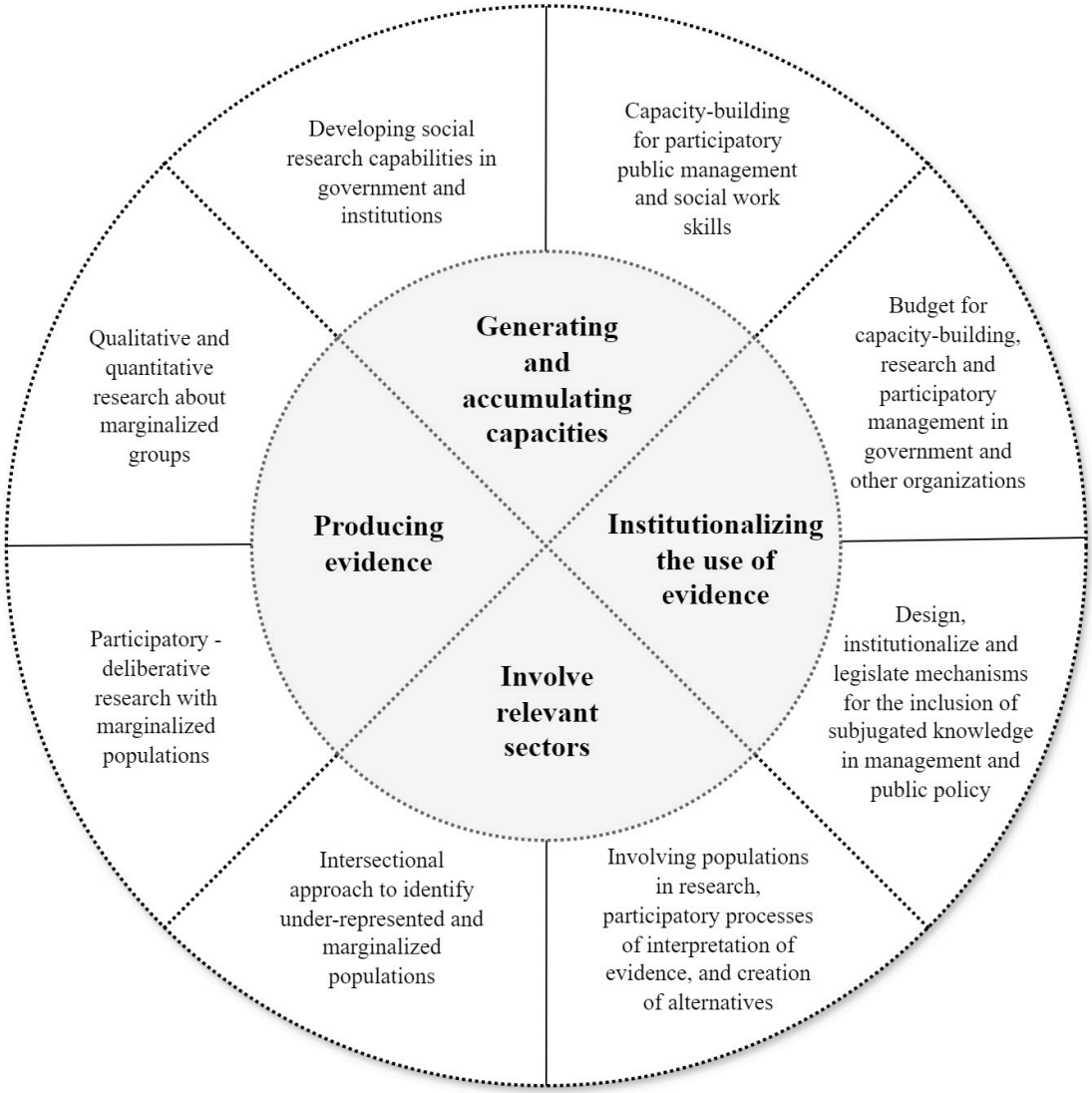

Figure 3. *Integrating the issue of subjugated knowledge into Evidence-Based Policy*

Source: Own elaboration.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The alternative I present here for strengthening the component of (x) social demand (through subjugated knowledges) in an (y) empiricist approach (such as evidence-based policy]) shows an alternative for improving public service from a pragmatic approach. This particular alternative emphasizes that different ways of measuring, knowing and seeing the world can be used to produce rigorous and, at the same time, pluralistic 'truths' that can contribute to visualizing alternatives for our territories. As mentioned, 'subjugated knowledges' can contribute to strengthening EBP in terms

of (1) efficiency and (2) justice. As for efficiency, an effort to identify, facilitate and include subjugated knowledges can contribute to a more robust information and knowledge base that complements the empirical evidence obtained with other EBP methods, such as systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and randomized control trials. In this sense, evidence from 'subjugated knowledges' can especially strengthen the social policy component and information about territories with low data production (e.g., indigenous or rural regions). On the other hand, from this efficiency approach, the inclusion of 'subjugated knowledges' in the EBP, especially through participatory processes, can also contribute to interpreting existing evidence from different rationalities and ontologies. If carefully facilitated, this approach can lead to diversifying the repertoire of alternative solutions. Similarly, involving diverse sectors in solution design processes could contribute to broadening creative capacity based on existing evidence. This addresses one of the criticisms of EBP, arguing that there is no conclusive evidence that a better empirical basis leads to better decisions (Oliver et al., 2014).

From a justice approach, the inclusion of 'subjugated knowledges' can strengthen EBP through its component of apparent neutrality, which has also been questioned (Cartwright & Hardie, 2012), strengthening an argument about justice and care. In this sense, the institutional and social strengthening of the intersectional analysis of marginalized sectors and of visible (testimonial) and unarticulated (hermeneutic) knowledges, can contribute to looking at and better understanding not only the sectors traditionally recognized as excluded but also to inquiring more deeply into other types of exclusions and forms of violence that occur in our societies. In this way, this contributes to moving institutions and civil society toward an understanding of historical processes of alienation and violence in specific social sectors and, thus, the conditions under which consciousness unfolds in our societies. In this way, public policy and other social efforts are mobilized toward processes of social reparations and prevention of forms of exclusion and violence. From a cost–benefit argument in social policy (or social returns to investment) (Hutchinson et al., 2018), these investments are crucial in the short and long term, as they derive initially in social welfare but also in social and individual improvements in the capacity to learn, economic practices, physical and mental health, social cohesion, as well as decreases in crime, and public spending on health, care and security, among others, that could be empirically investigated and argued.

In conclusion, in many parts of the world, but especially in the global South, it is still possible to observe the need to include science and empirical measurements in governance apparatuses to reduce uncertainty and improve the 'truth' behind policy decisions, as argued by evidence-based policy

approaches. However, it is also necessary to recognize the limitations of primarily empiricist approaches, as they ultimately rely on human apparatuses owing to their inherent limitations and possibilities. Therefore, the social component of collective decision-making is inevitable and essential. Consequently, other approaches that strengthen the interpretative component of decisions (social demand) can make an important contribution to strengthening governmental decision-making apparatuses by strengthening the circumstances and capacities through which people and communities can be included and decide on their future. From this perspective, governmental decision-making is interpreted not merely as an empirical calculation with an unequivocal outcome but also as a creative and contingent act in the face of a multiplicity of complex and interconnected variables, with diverse possibilities, even in decisions that seem simpler and linear. In this sense, political decisions are not just a calculation but an art: a creative act in which communities decide what they want to be. In this text, through the importance of 'subjugated knowledges', I argue for communities that choose to take on forms of historical violence and prioritize caring for their members.

Footnotes

[1] The argument I present could be developed using other comparable concepts and approaches, but I select the present ones in the belief that these concepts are actionable and allow reflection on the importance of criticisms of the scientific project from the perspective of public policy to be developed.

[2] The concept of subjugated knowledges is related to various critical concepts of the scientific project such as cognitive justice and vivisection by Visvananthan and Nandy (Visvanathan, 1997), or abysmal thinking and epistemicide by Boaventura da Soussa (Santos, 2014). These could contribute to strengthening critical public policy approaches to science and evidence, but cannot be developed in this brief essay.

[3] Among other interpretations, the scientific project can be seen as a project that generates 'vivisectional violence' (Visvananthan, 1977), by justifying the splitting or separating into elements to study something, which can lead to a desensitization to the violence of splitting into parts, which is extrapolated to the social dimension, leading to reductionisms of human and nonhuman life, and to the classification, separation and control of people and groups.

[4] These can be visualized for clarity in Morgan (2018).

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