

## **The steps model and stakeholders to observe the intensity of participation in the new public governance**

Antonia Danniele Jeska Torres de Oliveira  
PhD in Planning and Evaluation in Public Policies, State University of Ceará  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9973-495X>  
E-mail: [danniele.jeska@aluno.uece.br](mailto:danniele.jeska@aluno.uece.br)

Rodrigo Santaella Gonçalves  
Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Social Sciences in LUT University  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6190-8966>  
E-mail: [rodrigossantaella@yahoo.com.br](mailto:rodrigossantaella@yahoo.com.br)

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### **Abstract**

This article investigates the level of participation in public policies shaped by New Public Governance, focusing on assessing the democratic quality of decision-making processes in climate governance. The central question is: Can mapping decision-making across the phases of a public policy create a tool for measuring participation intensity through stakeholder analysis and social network mapping? The study hypothesizes that the steps model of public policy and the concept of “Participation Intensity” can serve as effective tools for monitoring democratic engagement within governance-based public policies. The theoretical framework applies public policy cycle theory to decision-making, enabling the development of a representative model that highlights participatory processes within public policy. Methodologically, the study combines bibliographic research with empirical applications, tracing the historical evolution of the public sector, divided into Classical and Contemporary periods. It applies the staged model of public policy cycle theory to elements of New Public Governance, focusing on consortia and public-private partnerships (PPPs) in solid waste management policy, with illustrative case studies in Brazil and Sweden. The results reveal varying levels of participation intensity across the cases, suggesting that the use of social network maps to analyze policy stages offers valuable insights into the context and challenges of democracy, decision-making processes, and participation in public policy. By delineating actors and mapping their relationships, this approach provides a practical framework for examining democratic processes in governance-based public policy.

**keywords:** Sustainability, Participation Intensity, Climate Justice.

## **Resumo**

Este artigo investiga o nível de participação em políticas públicas moldadas pela Nova Governança Pública, com foco na avaliação da qualidade democrática dos processos decisórios para a governança climática. A questão central é: o mapeamento da tomada de decisão ao longo das fases de uma política pública pode criar uma ferramenta para medir a intensidade da participação por meio da análise de stakeholders e do mapeamento de redes sociais? O estudo levanta a hipótese de que o modelo das etapas em políticas públicas e o conceito de “Intensidade de Participação” podem servir como ferramentas eficazes para monitorar o engajamento democrático em políticas públicas baseadas em governança. O arcabouço teórico aplica a teoria do ciclo de políticas públicas à tomada de decisão, permitindo o desenvolvimento de um modelo representativo que destaca os processos participativos dentro das políticas públicas. Metodologicamente, o estudo combina pesquisa bibliográfica com aplicações empíricas, traçando a evolução histórica do setor público — dividido em períodos Clássico e Contemporâneo. Aplica o modelo em estágios da teoria do ciclo de políticas públicas a elementos da Nova Governança Pública, com foco em consórcios e parcerias público-privadas (PPPs) em políticas de gestão de resíduos sólidos, com estudos de caso ilustrativos no Brasil e na Suécia. Os resultados revelam níveis variados de intensidade de participação entre os casos, sugerindo que o uso de mapas de redes sociais para analisar os estágios das políticas oferece insights valiosos sobre o contexto e os desafios da democracia, dos processos decisórios e da participação em políticas públicas. Ao delinear atores e mapear seus relacionamentos, essa abordagem fornece uma estrutura prática para examinar processos democráticos em políticas públicas baseadas em governança.

**Palavras-chave:** Sustentabilidade, Intensidade de Participação, Justiça Climática.

## **1 Introduction**

One of the major challenges in conducting public policy analyses stems from the choice of the scientific field that the researcher uses to achieve the proposed objectives. After all, the methods for observing and interpreting public policies are culturally and regionally diverse, constructed from various theories within different realities, societies, cultures, states, and types of capitalism.

This article reflects on the historical context of the development of public policy theories and assesses the various models used to observe the decision-making processes involved in this field of research. This discussion allows the researcher to situate the research problem within the multifaceted universe that constitutes public policy connecting and aligning concept democracy, energy transition with justice and equity.

The paths taken by a sustainability-oriented public policy are complex, multifaceted, and multidisciplinary. Observing this field through stages allows for the visualization of participatory processes, from agenda-setting (raising societal awareness of the conception of problems) and policy formulation to the implementation of governmental actions.

This study is situated within the context of the commitments assumed under the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015), which set the goal of limiting global warming by developing strategies to reduce high concentrations of carbon in the atmosphere. In the Brazilian case, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), specifically regarding waste, take on the mission of promoting adequate waste management policies and fostering the transition to a circular economy, with a focus on recycling and proper waste treatment. In this context, the policy for closing open-air dumpsites is linked to the green energy transition, digital transformation, and climate change mitigation

To understand the formation of the protagonism of institutional actors, the Stages Model is constructed. This approach presents the historical dimension of the development of public policy as a field and focuses on the observation of decision-making processes. The elements of this analysis are based on a thorough bibliographic review.

Intensity of Participation is perceived through decisions that are debated in a pluralistic manner and subsequently implemented through public services. Conducting this research provides a social orientation for instruments for defending democracy, allowing for the observation of the unequal distribution of decision-making power among institutions in the development and implementation of public policy.

The concept of Decision-Making Processes is discussed based on key authors in the field of public policy: Marques (2013), Cortes and Lima (2012), Sabatier and Schlager (2000), Farah (2018), Capella (2007), Vianna (1996), and Kingdon (2003).

The concept of Intensity of Participation involves continued and plural participation across consecutive stages, from problem definition (how the issue is treated by society, considering prior social and political contexts), agenda-setting (determining which political actors are capable of acting), development and formulation of services, implementation, and evaluation in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.

The concept of governance is built upon New Public Governance, Democratic Governance, Multi-level Governance, and Climate Governance, as presented in the IPCC reports and in the works of Balthasar, Schreurs, and Varone (2019); Jänicke, Schreurs, and Töpfer (2015); Silvestre (2017); Oliveira and Santaella (2022).

Justice and equity in relation to climate are presented in the IPCC reports. The concept of Inclusive Governance, which is addressed to develop solutions for climate justice aligned with the Paris Agreement, these principles indicates that justice and equity enable the creation of solutions to the climate emergency, as well as to economic and democratic crises, contributing to the reduction of inequalities and the eradication of poverty. However, it remains a challenge to engage people and to change their behavior in the face of the climate crisis (IPCC, 2021).

Observing a public policy through the perspective of action stages allows political science to overcome the bias that links *input* (political arena) to the contribution of administrative and bureaucratic factors that interact across different phases (*output*) of the political process (Werner; Wegrich, 2007). It also allows—and we aim to demonstrate in this article—that when participation occurs in one stage but is in some way ignored or annulled in the following stage, it may not be appropriate to speak of effective participation.

Methodologically, this study combines bibliographic research with empirical applications, tracing the historical evolution of the field of public policy, divided into the Classical and Contemporary Periods. These concepts are applied to the **Stages Model** within elements of New Public Governance (consortia and Public-Private Partnerships), using the Solid Waste Management Policy for empirical testing through case studies in Brazil and Sweden.

## **2 Decision-Making Processes: the connection between Public Policy and Political Science**

The following section presents the concepts of Decision-Making Processes and Participation Intensity. It also discusses New Public Governance and the open dump closure policies.

Public policies (as part of the field of Political Science) are understood as a domain of study that analyzes the set of actions implemented by the State and governmental authorities. Their analysis seeks to extract meaning from the decision-making processes that guide governmental action. This field aims to understand why and how the State acts, given the surrounding conditions (Marques, 2013, p. 24).

The importance of this field is emphasized for political sociology, which focuses on the actors, processes, and structures that shape the relationship between the State and society (Cortes; Lima, 2012). Historically, two main phases can be identified in the construction of public policy theories: the so-called “*Classical Period*” and the “*Second Period*.”

### **2.1 Decision-Making Processes during the Classical Period**

The Classical Period is historically delimited up to the 1970s. Between 1930 and 1960, political theories were dominated by systemic approaches that focused on actors, interests, and institutions (Sabatier; Schlager, 2000). During this time, public policy was predominantly conceived as a rational process that could be developed scientifically and neutrally (Farah, 2018).

Harold Lasswell (1930–1970), a precursor in this field and a representative of the behaviorist tradition (which emphasizes the behavior of individuals in the realm of public policy), advocated the establishment of a scientific analysis of government—later termed *Policy Analysis*. His approach was centered on understanding the social and political contexts surrounding policies and on the rationality of decision-making processes.

In general, the authors of the Classical Period raised the question of *who makes decisions*. For instance, Herbert Simon and David Easton, both American scholars associated with this period and identified as behaviorists, focused on organizational theories.

Simon concentrated on organizational theory, applying insights from experimental psychology and economics. He argued that individual rationality in decision-making is limited by available information, cognition, time, and resources.

Simon's theories enabled the systematic development of knowledge on administrative behavior, such as the bureaucratic structures of public procurement.

David Easton, in turn, developed systems theory to explain the interactions among the various subsystems that make up a policy. He refined Lasswell's earlier ideas on policy cycles (Marques, 2013).

We incorporate this question from the Classical Period into our empirical analyses, examining through social network mapping the institutional actors who hold decision-making power, particularly when analyzing networks within the framework of New Public Governance.

From the perspective of political science, with a focus on decision-making processes, it is worth noting that the first critiques of the Classical Period challenged the excessive systematization and alleged neutrality within public policy studies. While decision-making was central, it did not occur in a single moment. Instead, it often unfolded simultaneously and incrementally, shaped by cost considerations.

Incrementalism in decision-making had already been defended by Etzioni (1967), who argued that fundamental decisions create new directions and developmental lines within a policy—a process he termed “*mixed scanning*” (Marques, 2013).

The Elitist Theory also stands out, drawing attention to both the decisions that are made and those that are deliberately not made, based on configurations of power and influence in policy-making (Bachrach; Baratz). Stephen Lukes, critiquing Elitist Theory, advanced the Marxist Theory of the State, which raises the discussion of how ideology may be used to conceal interests.

Equally noteworthy is the “*Garbage Can Model*,” which suggests that decision-making processes are conducted by administrators under budgetary constraints. The authors argue that frontline bureaucrats often reinterpret rules and act according to their own beliefs (Cohen; March; Olsen; Marques, 2013)—that is, the very actors directly involved in policy implementation.

During this period, the notion of an integrated environment had not yet emerged. It was at that time that the establishment of the United Nations (1945) laid the foundations for the global environmental governance system, which was primarily focused on natural

resources.

## **2.2 Decision-Making Processes during the Second Period**

The second period begins in the 1970s, when reflections emerged that focused on the distinction between the formulation and implementation of public policies. In parallel, it happened the emergence of global environmental governance following the Stockholm Conference (1972) marked the beginning of the concept of sustainable development.

This period is characterized by governmental practices based on the association between public and private institutions. It is also marked by the rise of neoliberalism, which introduced significant changes to the economic and ideological structures of the State and society, permeated by the central values of competition and individual freedom.

The cognitive approach to Public Policy and Political Science also emerged at this time. This perspective emphasizes the role of ideas, beliefs, and knowledge, suggesting that the choice of a policy solution is influenced by values and ideas—contrary to the classical model, which regarded decision-making as neutral and derived from instrumental rationality (Farah, 2018).

Decision-making is thus understood as ambiguous rather than rational. Factors such as the turnover of actors within decision-making arenas lead to fluid participation and to a lack of clear understanding of how decisions affect society. According to Kingdon (2003), the decision-making process consists of the convergence of three streams: problems, proposals, and politics. Policymakers' responses to societal problems depend on how they perceive and interpret reality (Capella, 2007).

During this period, new agreements emerged, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio-92), the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement, which institutionalized global environmental governance, established targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and created the legal and economic foundations for environmental policy. Currently, global environmental governance is organized under the Paris Agreement and is based on cooperation, transparency, and shared responsibility

### 2.3 The Stages Model in Public Policy

Observing the decision-making processes of a public policy through the Stages Model involves combining classical and second-period concepts of decision-making. This makes it necessary to understand decision-making as encompassing all phases of a public policy.

This involves an extremely complex set of elements that interact over time, linked to hundreds of groups with potentially distinct values and interests, as well as different perceptions of situations and political preferences. Such processes are encompassed by a variety of programs, at multiple levels of government, operating in many localities. Most disputes involve deeply rooted values and interests, large sums of money, and, at times, authoritarian coercion (Sabatier, 2007).

To simplify this observation, we adopt the Stages Model, which focuses on the main moments of institutionalized decision-making. Our research concentrates on two specific stages: *Formulation* and *Implementation*.

The stages of public policies, as presented here, are understood within the theoretical framework of *policy cycles*, which are conceived as a sequence of distinct steps that together constitute the multifaceted complexity of a public policy. The cycle is also composed of governmental programs and actions aimed at addressing problems—problems that, in turn, are formulated and constructed as such through political and societal processes that supposedly involve public participation in agenda-setting.

### 2.4 The Intensity of Participation

The *Intensity of Participation* can be observed when there is diversity and continuity of interactions among institutional actors across successive stages. The success of governmental action depends on the relationship between the intentions of policymakers and the actions of implementers (Arretche, 2001).

The concept of intensity of participation is grounded in the stages of public policy, aligned with organizational theories, political science, and public administration. It marks the transition from the *input* to the *output* of public action, allowing political science to overcome the bias that separates these stages.

In participatory processes, there exists a chain of relationships between policymakers and implementers. These actors occupy different positions within the governmental apparatus, civil society, and private institutions. This implies the need for closer alignment between the intentions of policymakers and the actions of implementers, since the success of governmental action depends on this relationship (Arretche, 2001). The existence of such alignment ensures intensity of participation.

The formulation stage (its design) results from a broad process of negotiations and bargaining (agenda-setting). The final design is not necessarily the most adequate one, but rather the most widely accepted throughout the negotiation process (Arretche, 2001).

During the implementation stage, decisions tend to be modified. Observers must assess whether implementers adhere to the proposals, objectives, and methodologies of policymakers, especially because both policymakers and implementers tend to select implementation strategies based more on their potential acceptability than on their expected efficiency or effectiveness (Arretche, 2001).

Milani (2008) argues that the renewal of relationships between government and civil society enables participation, representation, and the promotion of protagonism. In this context, it is important to examine the profile of those who implement and those who formulate, and whether they participate in both stages, in order to analyze the continuity of policymakers in the implementation phase.

Attention must also be paid to State reform, which is grounded in public management and often inspired by the notion of *good governance*. This model, based on the parameters of minimalist democracy, emphasizes strategic rationality (Milani, 2008).

There is extensive criticism regarding the observation of public policies through heuristic models of cycles, stages, and processes. However, as we seek to demonstrate here, such observation is important and can make highly relevant contributions to understanding the incremental totality of policy-making. It is particularly useful for researchers examining the relationships among actors in public policy. Each stage involves a diversity of actors within arenas of negotiation shaped by conflicts of interest that evolve over time. Moreover, various models are employed in the analysis of

implementation, especially those drawing on game theory.

The incongruence of objectives, interests, loyalties, and worldviews between policymaking agencies and the diverse range of implementers makes it unlikely that a program will fully achieve its objectives or be implemented exactly as designed (Arretche, 2001).

When observing the shift of protagonism across stages, the focus is on *Formulation and Implementation*—that is, on the translation of participatory decisions into concrete actions. Experienced public managers know they will ultimately be judged not by their good intentions, but by their ability to master the “art of making things happen.” Implementation is, above all, political. It often involves elements from all the earlier stages of policy creation, as well as the uncertainties and contingencies that these may entail (Wu; Ramesh; Howlett; Frijzen, 2004).

Arretche (2001) provides an evaluation of the implementation process of public programs, aiming to problematize the bias that separates implementation from formulation. She highlights that not all government agencies are capable of formulating policies, and that the implementation stage often becomes a new phase in the life of institutional action, particularly because of the discontinuity of participation: actors who influence formulation rarely remain involved in implementation.

In this context, bureaucracy—with its endemic intra- and inter-organizational conflicts—emerges as an important and decisive actor in public policy. Implementation by public agencies is often a costly, multi-year effort, and the continued funding of programs and projects is generally not guaranteed. In reality, it requires ongoing negotiations and discussions between the political and administrative branches of the State (Wu; Ramesh; Howlett; Frijzen, 2004).

The protagonism of actors across consecutive stages (formulation and implementation) should thus be seen as a field of uncertainty. It depends on how the policy was formulated, the federal design of the program, the actors involved, and their networked relations—where each institution has its own interests, where public–private relations intervene, and where the central authority of the program seeks to induce implementers to fulfill its objectives (Arretche, 2001).

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## 2.6 New Public Governance and the Solid Waste Management Policy

The global system of multi-level climate governance was developed and consolidated globally beginning with ECO-92 and Agenda 21. This framework brought together a broad coalition of governmental, business, and civil society actors operating at all levels of the global multi-level climate governance system, allowing for wide access to and the development of technological solutions (Jänicke; Schreurs; Töpfer, 2015).

Multi-level governance must be aligned across its institutional, legal, political, and strategic structures (global, federal, state, regional, and local levels) to expand cooperative and co-productive processes that aim at sustainable development (Balthasar; Schreurs; Varone, 2019).

The alignment of Multi-level governance is particularly important for access to energy transition and digital transformation policies related to climate change, as multi-level governance enables access to financing and technologies and the development of projects capable of achieving a fair and equitable energy transition. Such infrastructure is largely developed through public-private partnerships (PPPs) and consortium (Pan; Santaella; Paraná, 2025; Oliveira; Santaella, 2022), elements of the new public governance.

The Solid Waste Management Policy, which forms part of the tripod of Environmental Sanitation Policy (Water and Sewage, Stormwater Drainage, and Waste), is largely implemented on a regionalized basis through the mechanisms of New Public Governance: consortia and public-private partnerships (PPPs). These involve cooperation, co-production, coordination, and the circular economy. Today, the problem of waste management is embedded within broader policies addressing the climate crisis.

Oliveira and Santaella (2022) provide a critique of participatory processes in governance, connecting them with the three administrative reforms that took place in Brazil (Bureaucratic Reform, New Public Management, and New Public Governance). They highlight neoliberal influence and the role of the State in the formulation and implementation of public policies. The authors emphasize the following points:

Neoliberalism enters State structures through loans granted by international development agencies. In the form of mixed public-private economies, these actors

engage in moderate coordination in the monetization of services. Governance can expand participatory processes, but there is also criticism of the neoliberal logic, which uses governance to implement privatizations and restructurings—establishing a new model of exercising power. Care must be taken not to reduce politics to mere management within this model, but rather to allow for the continued negotiation of divergent interests. Stakeholders become an important tool for observing both conflicting and convergent interests. Solidarity should be a central value of governance, while competition and individual freedom are central values of neoliberalism. In Brazil, neoliberal economic restructuring occurs through the promotion of fixed-variable income and credit expansion—a model currently in crisis due to widespread indebtedness (Oliveira; Santaella, 2022).

In the context of crises, governance plays a crucial role in addressing redistributive conflicts by opening new spaces for participatory processes. This is especially significant because governance integrates the State, the market, and civil society into the transformation of the public sector, seeking economic ventures as a means of providing public services (Oliveira; Santaella, 2022).

One of the main features of participatory processes under governance is the innovation and inclusion of non-governmental actors in all stages of public policy, along with the conceptualization of levels of participation (Silvestre, 2019).

This type of decision-making and institutional participation represents a connection between administrative mechanisms and the political and infrastructural dimensions of democratic political and institutional contexts (Filgueiras, 2018).

Thus emerges a new generation of administrative reforms aimed at joint action among diverse actors, with a focus on innovative solutions and sustainable development (Kissler; Heidemann, 2006). In this framework, multiple organizations interact in interdependent and complementary relationships, using a multiplicity of processes that enable a pluralist evolution of institutional participation.

Governance had its advent in Europe in the 1970s, which justifies the illustration of the European governance model through the example of the Swedish consortium. In Brazil, by contrast, the debate on governance in public management is relatively recent.

### 3 Methodology

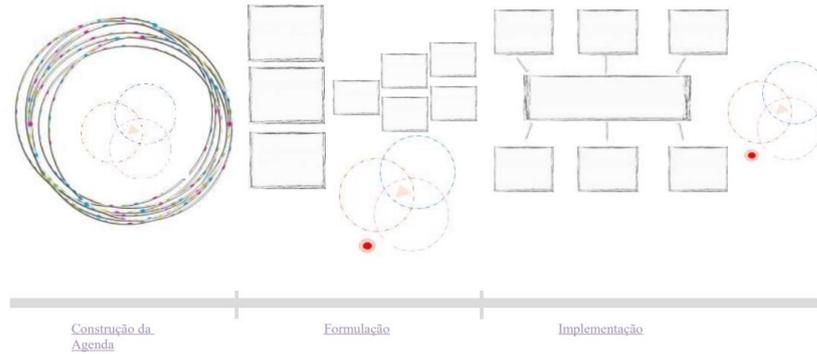
After presenting the Stages Model and discussing participatory processes and intensity of participation—connecting Public Policy and Political Science—we applied these concepts empirically through a Case Study in three units of analysis. These cases were selected because they represent different models of State and capitalism, as well as distinct forms of incorporating elements of New Public Governance, at various stages of formulation and implementation.

The units of analysis present diverse geopolitical and institutional characteristics: Codanorte Consortium (Brazil) – public management without concession; Consensus Consortium (Brazil) – management model based on a Public-Private Partnership (PPP); VafabMiljö (Sweden) – illustrative case that followed an eight-year concession and currently operates under a PPP arrangement.

The data treatment and analysis consist of observing the institutions in networks and the solutions formulated in the Integrated Solid Waste Management Plans (PGIRS) and their implementation. Next, we mapped the institutional actors who participated in each stage of the policy cycle, classifying them by type of *stakeholders* and observing both their continuity across successive stages and whether the proposed solutions were effectively implemented.

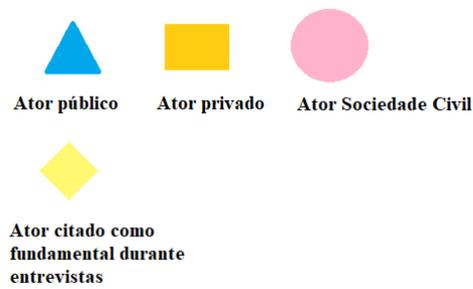
Finally, Social Network Maps were constructed using the UCINET software, enabling us to visualize the continuity of relationships and the diversity of actors involved throughout the stages, thus providing a more robust analysis of governance and participation dynamics.

**Figure 1:** Stage Model



Source: Own Authorship, 2024

**Figure 2:** Legend to observe the classification of institutions and the diversity of actors



Source: Own Authorship, 2024.

## 4 Results

The results reveal different levels of intensity of participation across the cases, indicating that the use of social network maps to analyze the stages of policy provides valuable insights into the context and challenges of democratizing effective participation in governance-oriented public policies.

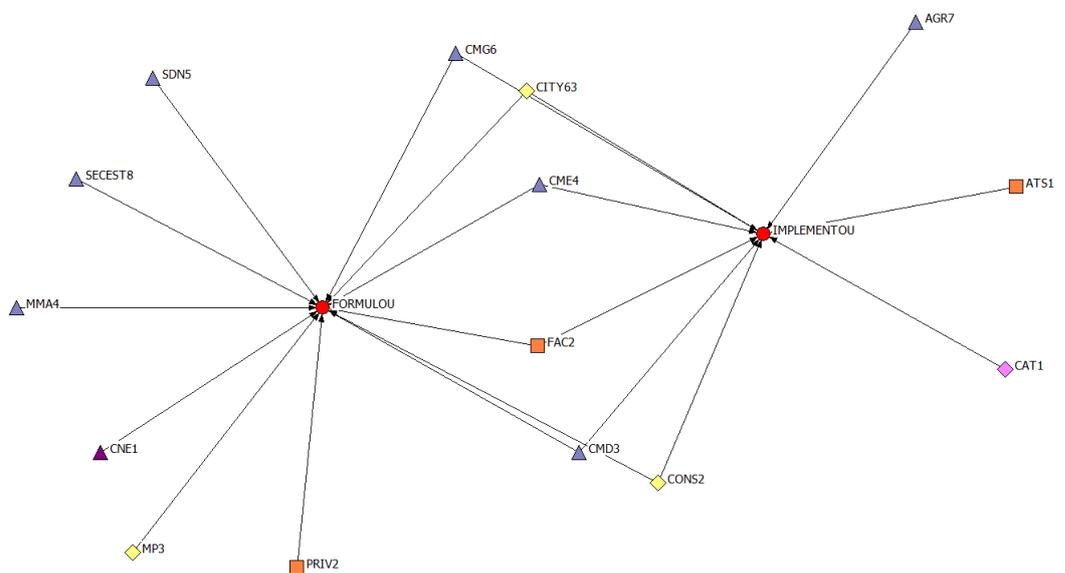
By delineating actors and mapping their relationships, this approach offers a practical framework to examine and evaluate democratic processes in governance-based public policies.

As previously mentioned, governance allows actors who participated in the formulation stage to develop strategies necessary to access the implementation of

services, thereby constructing a multifaceted network of interests embedded in projects and programs coordinated by consortia and PPPs.

The stages of public policy are aligned with both planning and decision-making models, developed based on organizational theories, political science, and public administration. Within this context, formulation and implementation mark the transition from the *input* to the *output* of public action, enabling political science to overcome the bias that connects these stages.

**Figure 3:** Intensity of Participation of the CODANORTE Consortium

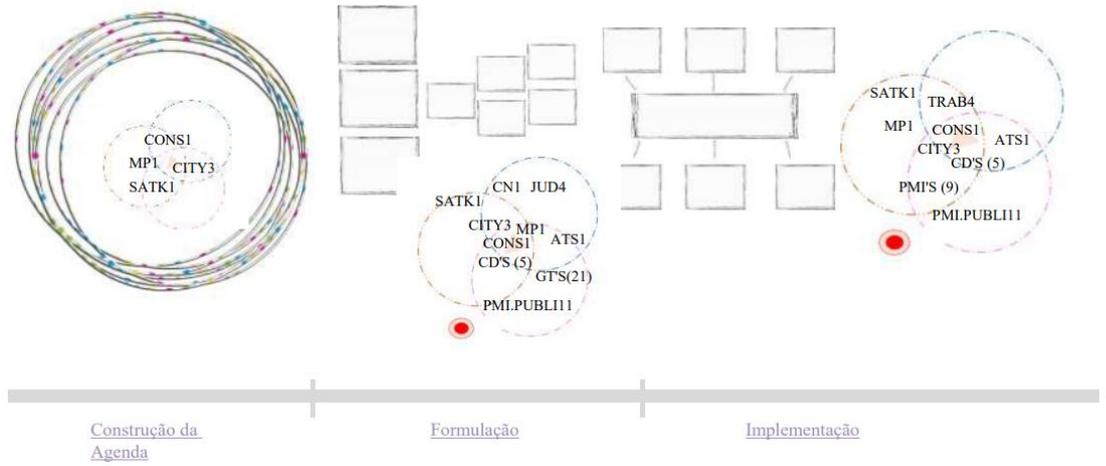


Source: Own Authorship, 2024.

**Figure 4:** Model of Stages and Continuity of Institutional Actors CODANORTE Consortium

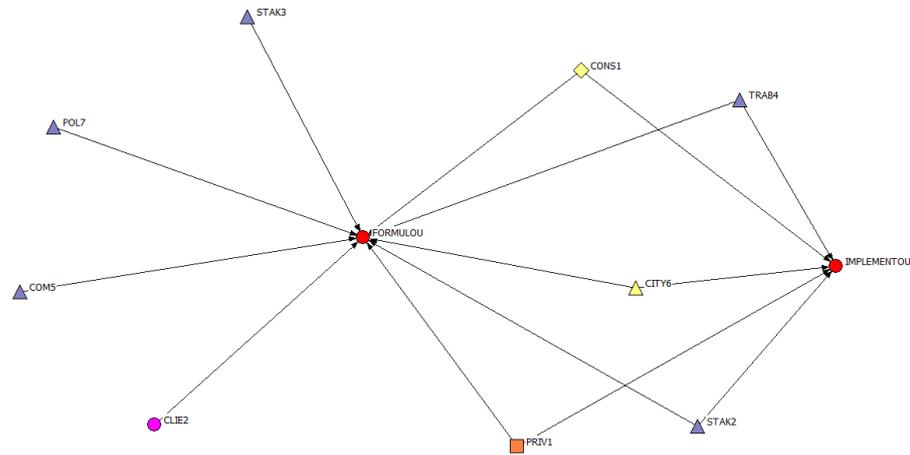


**Figure 6:** Model of Stages and Continuity of Institutional Actors CONSCENSUL Consortium



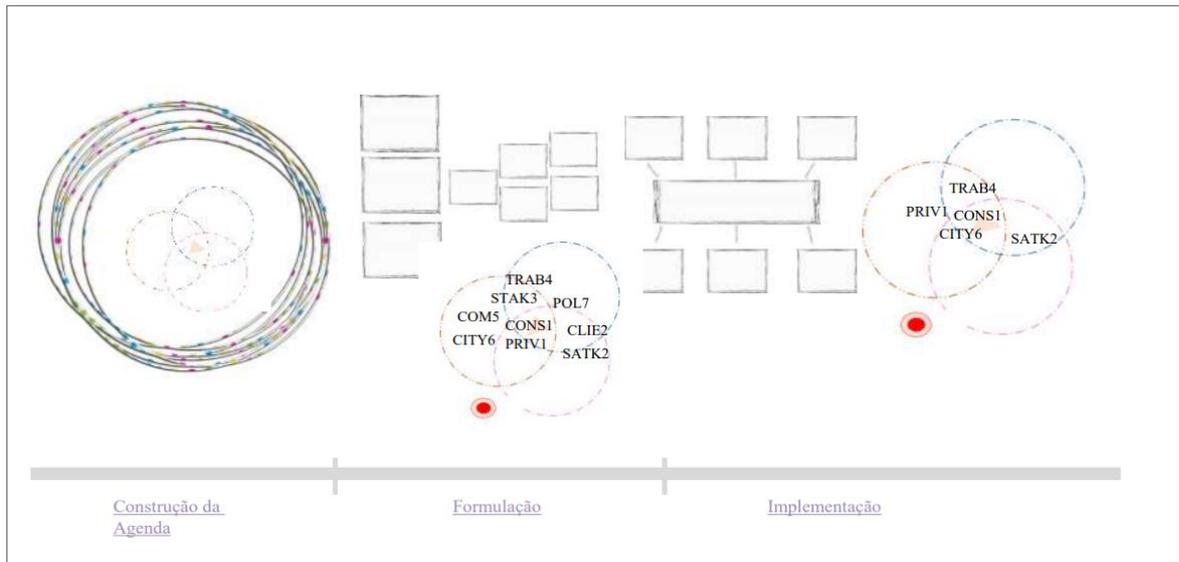
Source: Own Authorship, 2024.

**Figura 8:** Intensity of Participation of the VAFABMILJÖ Consortium



Source: Own Authorship, 2024.

**Figura 8:** Model of Stages and Continuity of Institutional Actors VAFABMILJÖ Consortium



Source: Own Authorship, 2024.

Social network maps show that consortia centralize power and legitimacy at key moments of decision-making, highlighting the capacity of governance elements to foster Intensity of Participation in decision-making processes and direct involvement in the implementation of public services.

When analyzing the social network maps, it becomes important to conduct a critical examination of the transitions of institutional managers across the stages. The theoretical perspective is confirmed, revealing that participation is being reconfigured. During the implementation stage, there is less diversity, and fewer institutions are involved.

In the Brazilian consortia, some actors serve as connectors across stages. This is not observed in the Swedish consortium, where all institutions participating in implementation also took part in the formulation of services. Additionally, the Swedish consortium plans its activities according to interest groups. In this context, decision-making is not centralized around institutional actors; rather, the model is based on congruent and conflicting interests.

It can be concluded that governance allows different groups to engage in dialogue over solutions; collective decision-making and control over implementation

make it possible to observe the Intensity of Participation.

Different levels of intensity of participation are revealed across the cases, confirming that the use of social network maps to analyze the stages of policy provides valuable insights into participatory processes, actor diversity, and continuities and ruptures in participatory practices.

By delineating institutions and mapping their relationships, this approach provides a practical framework for examining democratic processes in public policies guided by elements of New Public Governance.

Finally, the unequal distribution of decision-making power among institutions can be observed in the development and implementation of public policies guided by the elements of New Public Governance (consortia and Public-Private Partnerships – PPPs).

In this context, the Stages Model can be considered an important instrument for researchers to highlight actors, participation, and democracy in public policy research. It characterizes and visualizes central actors, measures how the protagonism of actors changes across stages, and facilitates dialogue between theory and empirical evidence with regard to participatory processes within public policy.

## **5 Conclusion**

Participation intensity demonstrates that there is a plurality of institutional actors in governance-driven participatory arrangements. However, Brazilian consortia do not promote effective democratic participation across all stages. In Sweden, stakeholder planning expands the capacity for democratic participation, reduces arenas of political conflict, and fosters cooperation and co-production by developing projects that promote the circular economy among stakeholders.

It can be concluded that the *Stages Model* with stakeholders can be considered a valuable tool for highlighting actors and participation, as well as for guiding the understanding of inclusion, continuity, exclusion, and/or marginalization of certain actors throughout decision-making processes across stages.

Using stakeholder mapping and social network analysis, we examined the dynamics of cooperation, coordination, and co-production among public authorities,

private actors, and civil society. The results highlight both the democratic potential of governance arrangements and the risks of corporate governance prevailing over democratic participation.

Regarding actors, theory suggests that by segmenting decision-making processes into stages, it becomes possible to measure, classify, and categorize them according to various theoretical perspectives. To emphasize participation, theories in the field of public policy indicate a diversity of methods that allow for understanding strategic and power relationships involved in participatory and decision-making processes within public policies — for example, by applying insights from experimental psychology and economics, incorporating knowledge of administrative behavior, testing organizational theories, and observing configurations of power to understand how these are influenced by values and ideas. That is, after outlining the participation network, it becomes possible to deepen knowledge about decision-making processes.

By understanding the participation of institutional actors in the context of a public policy for climate emergency — developed through elements of *New Public Governance* — it becomes possible to examine dominant interest groups and assess the level of democratic capacity achieved by the public sector. By evaluating these concepts, parameters can be established to observe the inclusion and diversity of actors.

Furthermore, by correlating the network with the scope of implemented solutions, it is possible to determine whether the applied solutions meet the formulated objectives and whether, in this context, there is continuity in the participation of diverse actors. From these insights, we can identify and discuss participation intensity as a means to achieve inclusive governance for a fair and equitable energy transition.

It is concluded that the *Stages Model* and *Participation Intensity* framework can be extended to analyze climate and environmental policies, supporting decision-makers in implementing equitable and sustainable transitions aligned with COP 30 goals. The concept of participation intensity enables dialogue on the democracy of decision-making processes and connects this topic to processes of social, economic, and political transformation aimed at achieving sustainable societies with their sociobiodiversity protected.

In summary, through network-based participation analysis, it is possible to present the plurality of actors and examine the configuration of the State; provide a detailed account of participation; observe actors across all stages of a public policy; classify them as stakeholders; and identify neoliberal influences as well as points of resistance. In this way, the *Stages Model* and *Participation Intensity* framework allow researchers to reveal the configurations of democracy within a public policy.

Future work will introduce a *Participation Intensity (PI) Index* designed to capture the depth and influence of stakeholder engagement.

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