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## ***Deliberative citizenship: a case study about the discussion process promoted by the first collective mandate from Brazil***

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### **Abstract**

This article develops a reflection on collective mandates in the Brazilian political system and analyzes the possible contribution to local development, based on practices that encourage deliberative citizenship. The case study was based on the analysis of posts made by the Collective Mandate Alto Paraíso de Goiás (CMAPG) on the group's official Facebook page for 39 months. Based on a set of indicators proposed by the Getulio Vargas Foundation's Social Management Studies Program (SMSP), which aims to analyze deliberative citizenship in practice, we evaluate the performance of CMAPG in the "discussion process" category, evaluating the following criteria : disclosure of communication channels, quality of information, spaces for transversality, plurality of the promoting group, existing agencies, inspection agencies and relationships with other participatory processes. We use Content Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (ACD) as methodological resources. We have theoretical discussions on deliberative democracy and digital democracy. We have identified several elements in the discussion process conducted by CMAPG that contribute to deliberative citizenship and enable articulation between social actors, favouring local development.

**Keywords:** Deliberative democracy. Deliberative citizenship. Collective mandates. Public spheres. Communicative action.

**Cidadania deliberativa: um estudo de caso sobre o processo de discussão promovido pelo primeiro mandato coletivo do Brasil**

### **Resumo**

Esta pesquisa promove a reflexão sobre a possibilidade de contribuição do formato de representação política baseado em mandatos coletivos para o desenvolvimento local a partir de práticas de incentivo à cidadania deliberativa. O estudo de caso baseou-se na



análise das postagens feitas pelo Mandato Coletivo Alto Paraíso de Goiás (MCAP) na página oficial do grupo no Facebook durante um período de 39 meses. Com base em um grupo de indicadores propostos pelo Programa de Estudos em Gestão Social (PEGS) da Fundação Getúlio Vargas, destinado à análise da cidadania deliberativa na prática, avaliamos o desempenho do MCAP na categoria “processo de discussão”, avaliando os critérios canais de difusão, qualidade da informação, espaços de transversalidade, pluralidade do grupo promotor, órgãos existentes, órgãos de acompanhamento e relação com outros processos participativos. Utilizamos como recursos metodológicos a Análise de Conteúdo e a Análise de Discurso Crítica (ADC). Apoiamo-nos em discussões teóricas sobre democracia deliberativa e democracia digital. Identificamos diversos elementos no processo de discussão conduzido pelo MCAP que contribuem para o desenvolvimento da cidadania deliberativa e que possibilitam uma articulação entre os atores sociais, habilitando-os para a atuação em prol do desenvolvimento local.

**Palavras-chave:** Democracia deliberativa. Cidadania deliberativa. Mandatos coletivos. Esferas públicas. Ação comunicativa.

### **Ciudadanía deliberativa: un estudio de caso sobre el proceso de discusión promovido por el primer mandato colectivo de Brasil**

#### **Resumen**

Esta investigación promueve la reflexión sobre la posibilidad de contribución del formato de representación política basado en mandatos colectivos para el desarrollo local a partir de prácticas que incentiven la ciudadanía deliberativa. El estudio de caso se basó en el análisis de las publicaciones realizadas por el Mandato Colectivo de Alto Paraíso de Goiás (MCAP) en la página oficial del grupo en Facebook, durante un período de 39 meses. A partir de un conjunto de indicadores propuestos por el Programa de Estudios de Gestión Social (PEGS) de la Fundación Getúlio Vargas, destinados al análisis de la ciudadanía deliberativa en la práctica, evaluamos el desempeño del MCAP en la categoría llamada “proceso de discusión”, evaluando los criterios de medios de difusión, calidad de la información, espacios de transversalidad, pluralidad del grupo promotor, órganos existentes, órganos de seguimiento y las relaciones con otros procesos participativos. Utilizamos el Análisis de Contenido y el Análisis Crítico del Discurso (ACD) como recursos metodológicos. Nos apoyamos en discusiones teóricas sobre democracia deliberativa y democracia digital. Hemos identificado varios elementos en el proceso de discusión realizado por el MCAP que contribuyen al desarrollo de la ciudadanía deliberativa y que posibilitan la articulación entre los actores sociales, permitiéndoles actuar en favor del desarrollo local.

**Palabras clave:** Democracia deliberativa. Ciudadanía deliberativa. Mandatos colectivos. Esferas públicas. Acción comunicativa.

## **1 Introduction**

With the crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy, in which there is a breakdown of trust between those represented and representatives and a certain consensus among citizens that the actors of the political system today do not express the general interest (CASTELLS, 2018), new ways of doing politics - which involve more consistent forms of popular participation - have emerged as an alternative to overcome this scenario. One of them is the collective mandates in the legislative, which replace the traditional mandate, in which decision-making power is centralized in the figure of the elected representative, with models in which a group of representatives shares decision-making. These political representation

formats are underway in several countries in Latin America and Western Europe for over the past 20 years, including Brazil, where they are more frequent in local legislative management positions, with councillors (SECCHI et al., 2019).

Collective mandates present possibilities to increase citizen participation in decision-making processes (SECCHI et al., 2019). They are a differentiated opportunity to leverage local development, working with the population needs represented by that group of parliamentarians.

Considering this scenario, we present a case study of the Collective Mandate of Alto Paraíso de Goiás (CMAPG), classified as the first collective mandate experiment in Brazil (SECCHI et al., 2019). In 2016, five people competed together for a seat in the municipal Legislature. With their victory, the cabinet's political and administrative management and the mandate took place in a decentralized manner through deliberation between them.

The agreement signed by the CMAPG provides that its members share with the population information on the activities carried out by the mandate (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2016). In a context in which the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) proves to be increasingly strategic to mobilize public participation, CMAPG's main information channel is an official page on the social network Facebook, with 8005 followers (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019).

In this study, our objective was to evaluate the discussion process promoted by the CMAPG with the population, to identify whether the contents and speeches published by this collective mandate are in favour of the deliberative citizenship in practice and, consequently, if they are a differentiated possibility contribution to local development. For this, we analyzed the content and discourse of the publications made on the official CMAPG page on Facebook for 39 months, between September 4, 2016, and December 31, 2019. We used a group of indicators proposed by the Social Management Studies Program (SMSPP) of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation to analyze deliberative citizenship in practice. Focusing on the axis of hands called the discussion process, we evaluate dissemination channels, quality of information, transversality spaces, promoting groups' plurality, existing bodies, monitoring bodies, and relationships with other participatory processes. For the clarity aspect, within the criteria of the information's quality, it was necessary to use the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In the aspect's diversity and usefulness of the information, we carried out a Categorical Analysis of Content and the other criteria.

The studies on deliberative democracy and digital democracy have supported our theoretical reflections. We started from the assumption that, for there to be effective participation of individuals in the democratic process, united by the search for ethical understanding and consensus just like the deliberation model proposed by the CMAPG, the existence and promotion of deliberative citizenship is fundamental (VITAL et al., 2019). From the Habermasian perspective, deliberative citizenship means that political decisions' legitimacy must originate in discussion processes. These must be guided by the principles of inclusion, pluralism, participatory equality, autonomy and the common good (TENÓRIO; KRONEMBERGER, 2016). The analysis carried out allows us to reflect how much a differentiated political representation model, such as collective mandates, is aligned

with deliberative citizenship precepts and expresses this through digital communication tools to discuss local/regional interest topics.

At the end of the analysis, it was possible to observe aspects present in the discussion process carried out by the CMAPG with the population of Alto Paraíso de Goiás meet. In large part, the criteria of deliberative citizenship regarding the instituted discussion process have a potential differentiated contribution to local development promotion.

## **2 New forms of political representation: the crisis of the representative model and the emergence of collective and shared mandates**

Classical representative democracy has shown insufficiency in the world. Secchi et al. (2019) found that the decrease in public confidence in the responsiveness of democracy is a phenomenon present in many countries. In 2018, indexes on recognizing the democracy raised by the Chilean institute Latinobarómetro<sup>1</sup> (1), active since 1995, reached historic harmful levels. Considering 18 countries, we found that 71.4% of Latin Americans are "not satisfied" or "not at all satisfied" with the democracy existing in their countries, and 58.6% believe they are living in a "democracy with great problems" or in a regime that "is not a democracy".

Rancière (2014) argues that the representative democratic model presents itself as a government of the people but continues to act to ensure the elites' privileges, who now have the legitimacy to govern when they manage to be elected. For him, there is still an "Oligarchic State". For Fonseca, Lacerda and Pereira (2014), the current representative democratic system cannot promote, in fact, citizenship. The people are placed in a passive position, with restricted sovereignty to the moment of voting, choosing between the options offered by the parties. Then, there would be a search for a democracy that evokes society's active participation (CASTELLS, 2018).

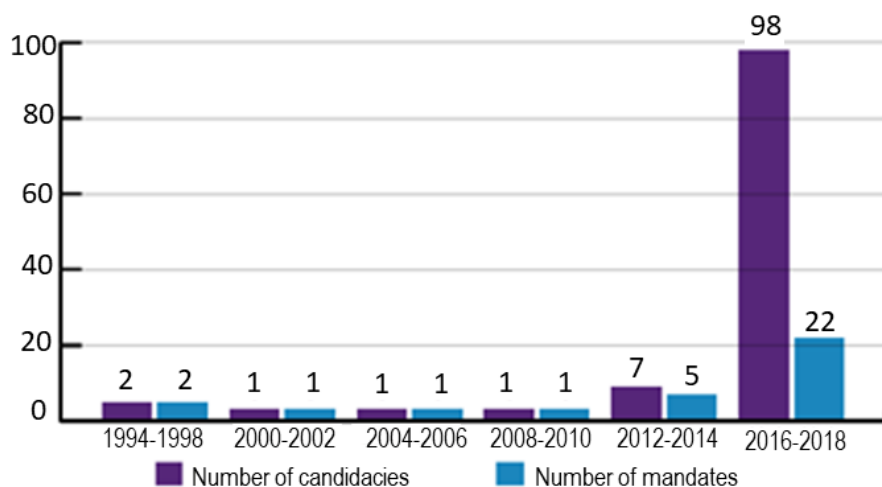
New ways of doing politics, which involve popular participation in a more consistent manner, have emerged as an alternative to overcome this scenario. Initiatives with participatory formats have already achieved electoral success in the Legislature in several countries, including Brazil, where mandates' emergence focused on public participation can be observed for more than 20 years. Between 1994 and 2018, Secchi et al. (2019) mapped 94 people who developed, in their candidacies, instruments and logics of a collective or shared mandate, competing in 110 legislative campaigns across Brazil, dispersed in 50 municipalities and 17 states of the federation. The disputed positions were councillor, state deputy, federal deputy, and senator, representing 22 political parties and reaching together more than one million and two hundred thousand valid votes. Still, it was verified that this candidacy/mandate has been more common for the councillor position. (SECCHI et al., 2019).

The significant expansion of shared and collective mandates in Brazil occurred after the 2012 municipal elections, as shown in figure 1.

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<sup>1</sup> 20,204 face-to-face interviews were conducted in 18 Latin American countries between June 15 and August 2, 2018, including Brazil.

Figure 1: The evolution of collective and shared candidacies and mandates in electoral cycles (1994-2018) \*



Source: SECCHI et al. (2019), with primary TSE data (2019). (2)

Suppose in the legal mandate; the legislator has the autonomy to vote and develop projects according to his conscience and interests in the collective and shared mandates. In that case, the legislative representative undertakes to share the decision-making power with a group of representatives, either via aggregation of preference (vote) or consensus-building (deliberation) (SECCHI et al., 2019).

There is still no consolidated model for these mandates: some involve small groups of people; others mobilize citizens of the community in general; they can be plural or more homogeneous. Some share campaign costs and/or financial benefits in an organized manner (SECCHI et al., 2019). However, suppose the objective of these initiatives is to make more efficient political representation and decisions more correct. In that case, we defend that public debate with citizens must be a premise in these models. Otherwise, the leap will be only from a situation in which an elected person concentrates on another's decision-making power. A local group shares that power without necessarily considering the dynamics of the public spheres and the public interest. It is true that, with a more significant number of people being responsible for decisions, the adverse effects of limited rationality, resulting from human fallibility, are already reduced. An individual alone has a limited capacity for knowledge and imagination, limiting his ability to make the best choice. But when this number expands to include popular participation, the overcome of the rationality limitation is more expressive (FAIRCLOUGH; FAIRCLOUGH, 2012).

Therefore, our analysis of the discussion process carried out by CMAPG with the population of Alto Paraíso de Goiás seeks to identify whether there is an intersubjective and communicative space that enables the understanding of the social actors involved and can favour deliberative citizenship in practice and local development.

### 3 Democracy, deliberation, and digital resources

Deliberative democracy can be understood as an instrument for expanding representative democracy. It is focused on the communicative processes, forming opinion and willingness, without excluding the voting process (CHAMBERS, 2009).

The main discussions about deliberative democracy are based on the work of the German theorist Jürgen Habermas. Avritzer (2009) explains, from Habermas' perspective, deliberative democracy is based on the inclusion principle, whereby all individuals affected by a law or public policy must present and argue their reasons, with an argumentative exchange between individuals with values, distinct views, and interests.

The deliberative democracy proposed by Habermas is linked to his concept of communicative rationality. Habermas (2012a) considers that everyone's reflexive capacity is expanded through language - communicative action. When formulating the Theory of Communicative Action (TCA), Habermas (2012) attributes to the rational use of language a way of seeking consensus and the common good. The author sustains that the search for understanding between individuals is possible through language, which coordinates the action and enables consensus, even if provisional, based on free debate, searching for the best arguments and verifying validity claims exposed by the interlocutors in the dialogue. Individuals act as speakers and listeners, present claims of fact in their opinions, which can be accepted or questioned, at any time, always in the search for understanding. In communicative rationality, interests linked to knowledge for the common good prevail. The characteristic interests of strategic rationality, such as searching for achievement and success, cannot prevail over the former.

In communicative action, members of the interpreters' community must recognize, in speech acts, four claims of validity: truth, righteousness and legitimacy (normative correction), sincerity and comprehensibility (HABERMAS, 2012). If these requirements are not met in the speech act, there is no communicative but strategic action, characterized by instrumentality and the search for individual achievement. It is through communicative action that deliberative democracy becomes possible.

By taking law as a language that socializes and integrates people in Democracy, Habermas addresses the tensions between facticity and validity. The applicability of law corresponds to facticity, to its immutable condition, and its validity occurs through the universality of rational acceptability. For a law to have greater legitimacy before citizens, it is necessary to consider the existing context in the world-of-life (space where the daily relationships of individuals are established based on the interactions between personality, culture, and society) and the argumentative process which takes place under a "large consensual background" (HABERMAS, 2012a, p. 40). From the communicative action, the arguments are appropriated collectively, in an intersubjective way. The more discussions based on rational arguments, the more legitimacy the regulations will have and the more likely they will be followed.

Habermas (2012a) presents, through deliberative democracy, the conditions of possibility for constructing a new political culture that strengthens this popular

sovereignty, allowing greater inclusion and engagement of citizens in the process of organization and society's decision-making the construction of normative.

Therefore, Habermas (2011b, 2012a) considers that the world-of-life can influence and interfere in the system through communicative action in the public sphere (MARQUES, 2008, p.25). The public spheres are part of a deliberative political system; they are intermediate spaces between the central administrative actors' political discussions and the conversations between the peripheral civic actors (HABERMAS, 2011b).

Local development can have many impulses due to the performance of legislative mandates based on the deliberative processes. We can think of it as a reality that enables us to achieve, in a decentralized way, greater social democratization, popular participation and economic vitality (YÁÑEZ, 1998), based on a dynamic process of activity and synergy of local actors who act in an organized way together with the decision centres of the social and political-economic group to which they belong (GUERRERO, 1996). As provided by Zani and Tenório (2014), local development requires the involvement of actors from different segments present in that territory. In this way, the mobilization of the population participation has differentiated potential when it occurs within the municipality since there is a greater tendency to involve citizens with problems and close issues.

Ribeiro (2007) recalls that the objects of the here and now draw consciousness's attention since it is in everyday life that the individual acts to intervene in his reality. With social media and other Internet resources for social mobilization, this possibility of acting on local issues gains new opportunities.

The role of ICTs has awakened scholars to the possibility of increasing deliberative actions in democracy since they expand the public sphere and the political arena, enabling an instantaneous, two-way flow, which was not a reality with traditional media. All citizens can produce and publish content without intermediaries. Web activism then appears as a form of pressure on public authorities.

The so-called digital democracy points to a possible transformation of participatory democracy. It reduces participation costs (it does not require travel, and the time needed for action is less than in face-to-face efforts). It horizontalizes communication and allows the monitoring of political activities, etc. Virtual tools would enable collaboration to overcome the crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy (ARAÚJO; PENTEADO; SANTOS, 2015).

Gomes (2005) defends that digital democracy should incorporate both the liberal menu (with transparency, accountability, openness) and the participation of its individuals (with opportunities for participation and deliberation).

In itself, the possibilities offered by the internet do not mean an automatic promotion of political participation and good collaboration for democracy (ROSSETTO; CARRERO, 2012). Habermas (2006) considered that the so-called public online spheres are not within the normative standard that he suggests. However, for Ribeiro, Temer and Tuzzo (2013), the ICTs can promote deliberative communication, participation in political decisions. It is a test for citizens' sovereignty through communicative action, even if it is still in a very initial stage.

The authors (2013) say that it is possible to consider that the virtual space functions as a space like cafes and salons, treated by Habermas when speaking of

the bourgeois public sphere. We may not feel the web as a complete and self-sufficient public sphere, but it can certainly increase discussions in a broader public sphere or be admitted as one among the various existing public spheres (HABERMAS, 2003).

Pointing out what is necessary for effective use of the web to promote good deliberation, Rothberg (2010) recalls the United Kingdom practices. He considers that there is a more advanced stage of public consultation instruments. There is the provision of information boards and comprehensive interpretations to support the analysis of Internet users, contextualization and mediation of discussion forums and a process of returning to people's contributions, which leads them to realize whether their positions have been incorporated or not, and the reason. Thus, it is necessary to have all the information available to support the debate (advantages and disadvantages of the proposed action, possible alternatives, consequences, historical background, etc.), which can occur in the mediated forums, for example (ROTHBERG, 2010).

#### 4 Methodology

The proposed research is qualitative and seeks to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon. It is a case study on the discussion process, promoted by CMAPG, as an intersubjective and communicative space capable of understanding the social actors involved.

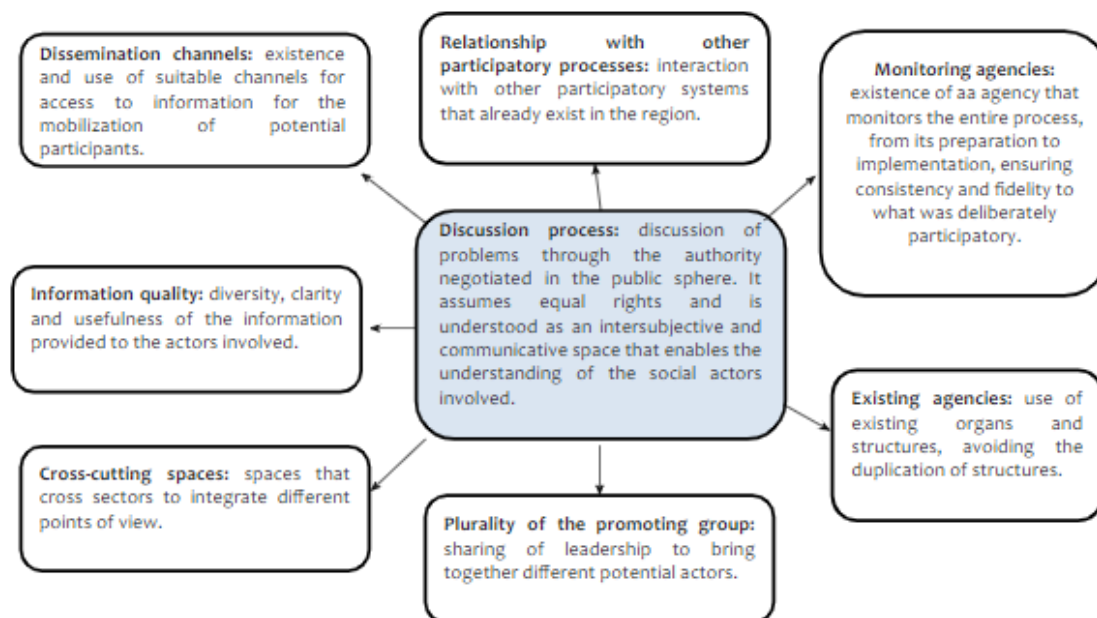
For the deliberative democracy to find viable conditions for its realization, many authors deal with the criteria necessary for its development, such as reciprocity among citizens; the presence of principles such as advertising, accountability, essential freedom, essential opportunity and fair opportunity (GUTMANN; THOMPSON, 2009); absence of coercion, equality of power and resources, rational deliberation and the search for a rationally motivated consensus (JOHN COHEN apud MANSBRIDGE, 2009); exchange of reasonable arguments, mutual respect, cooperation and empathy, acceptance of conflict as a critical element for social progress (TARRAGÓ; BRUGUÉ; CARDOSO-JR, 2015, 2015, p.21).

Along these lines, the Social Management Studies Program (SMSP) of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV) developed 21 analysis criteria based on six categories defined by Tenório (VILLELA, 2012), in an attempt to understand deliberative citizenship in practice. They are, therefore, categories that make it possible to identify whether a movement meets the criteria of deliberative democracy and encourages citizen participation. In this paper, we will analyze one of these categories: the discussion process.

Other categories and criteria listed by SMSP are a) inclusion (opening up decision-making spaces, social, political and technical acceptance and citizen appreciation); b) pluralism (participation of different actors and the profile of the actors); c) participatory equality (a form of choice of representatives, the speech of representatives and participatory evaluation); d) autonomy (origin of the propositions, responsibility of the actors and possibility of exercising their willingness); e) common good (the objectives achieved and citizen approval of the results). (VILLELLA, 2012)

The category of the discussion process, our focus in this study, seeks to analyze how debate and decision-making take place in the public sphere and whether there are equal opportunities for participation and open dialogue between the actors. The criteria that make up the category are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Analysis criteria in the discussion process category



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on Villela (2012).

The choice of Facebook as an instrument for collecting information is because, among the existing social media, it stands out as having the most significant number of active users, with more than 2 billion participants (FACEBOOK, 2019). The official CMAPG page on Facebook was the first communication strategy used by the mandate since September 4, 2016, and the one with the most significant public reach, with 8505 followers.

292 posts made by CMAPG on Facebook were collected from the creation of the page until December 31, 2019. We used methodological resources from Content Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze categories and criteria. Content Analysis was referenced in Bardin (2011), opting for the categorical technique, which uses the breakdown of texts into units grouped by the researcher into categories (BARDIN, 2011). The sample texts were grouped by themes for the analysis of the proposed criteria.

CDA is a theoretical-methodological approach that considers language connected to other social elements (RESENDE; RAMALHO, 2006) and provided resources to analyze the clarity of the information criterion within the criterion of Quality of Information. CDA makes it possible to identify connections and non-evident causes, making it possible to understand social change and overcome asymmetric relationships between the actors, as long as critical reflexivity is present. In addition to the texts' grammar, this analysis makes it possible to identify what types of events are represented there, how social relations are built, and how

they are structured, reaffirmed, and contested hegemonies (FAIRCLOUGH, 2001). Thus, to analyze the information published on the CMAPG's Facebook page, aspects of the language used were analyzed, including vocabulary, simplification and explanation resources, coherence, cohesion, as well as other perspectives necessary for the text to be understandable and allow the involvement of people with thematic causes. Therefore, we pay attention to the interlocutor's need to understand the speeches defended by Van Dijk (1990). We also sought aspects of the discourse that indicate a tendency towards democratization, which according to Fairclough (2001), is a contemporary discursive change that refers to removing inequalities and asymmetries of rights, obligations, and discursive and linguistic prestige of groups of people. The elimination of the explicit markers of power hierarchy and asymmetry and the tendency towards informality of languages, among other aspects, are examples of the trend towards democratization we seek to identify in the posts published on CMAPG's Facebook.

## 5 Analysis of the discussion processes

In this analysis, we identified how the discussion process occurs in the interlocations of the actors involved in the activities of the CMAPG, based on the criteria proposed in Figure 2.

### *Dissemination channels*

We note that CMAPG uses several channels for disseminating information, fundamental tools for mobilizing potential participants, both online and offline. ICTs are the most used strategies, and those that reach a wider audience. In addition to the official page on Facebook, the group developed a website in August 2017 that has been updated monthly with the accounts of the expenses incurred, bills and amendments presented, letters sent, description of the events held, monthly activity balances, among others documents in the mandate. In October 2019, the group expanded the possibility of reaching audiences on the internet to create an Instagram page.

In addition to using ICTs, we identified that CMAPG makes printed materials, such as leaflets for distribution to citizens and booklets, available to the community at stores and fairs. Since May 2017, the members have also participated in programs on local radio.

The press's interest in the mandate's format contributes to its activities gaining local, state, and national repercussions. Between the years 2016 and 2019, 32 publications were identified on news sites and blogs that made references to CMAPG.

We believe that the dissemination channels used by CMAPG have a great possibility of reaching potential participants. For comparative purposes, the collective's Facebook page alone had, at the end of 2019, 8005 followers, while the estimated number of residents of Alto Paraíso de Goiás in the same year, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2019), was 7624 people. It is necessary to consider that part of these followers is probably not citizens of Alto Paraíso de Goiás. But these results, combined with the offline strategies adopted by

the group for disseminating information and the insertions in the media, show that the diversity of channels used by CMAPG effectively reaches the local population.

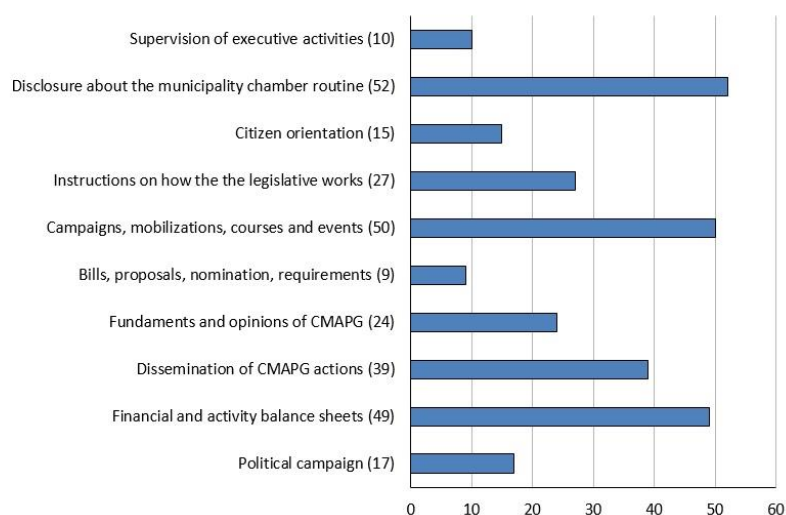
### *Quality of information*

#### *Diversity*

To ascertain the diversity of the information released by CMAPG, we used content analysis in the sample extracted from Facebook, grouping the posts by themes. We classified the 292 posts collected into ten categories.

We note considerable diversity in the topics covered in the CMAPG posts, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Categorization of Facebook posts by themes

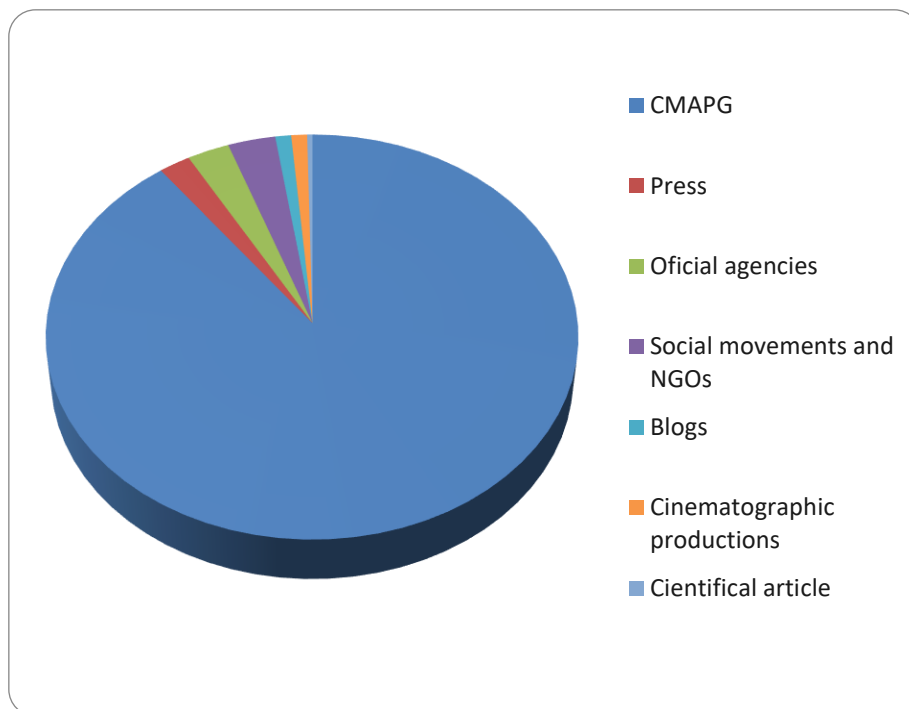


Source: Drawn by the authors (2020).

We also observed the use of diversified media formats to disseminate content since 193 posts had illustrative images (photographs or digital arts), 38 contained links to external websites or blogs, 23 were audiovisual content. There were also posts with only text (38).

As for the origin of the content published, we found that CMAPG uses information from other sources and the materials produced by the group itself (Figure 4). The contents of 262 posts were of their authorship, and 30 used other sources: social movements and non-governmental organizations (9), official agencies (8), press (6), blogs (3), cinematographic productions (3), scientific article (1).

Figure 4 Categorization of CMAPG Facebook posts by information sources



Source: Drawn by the authors (2020).

## Clarity

In this step, using methodological proposals from the CDA, we seek to identify how much the texts in the publications on the official CMAPG page facilitate the cognitive process on the part of the reader and democratize access to information - then focusing on the study of texts, excluding videos, arts and images, since it would require analyzes that also included aesthetic aspects. From the sample collected, nine posts were excluded because they did not have any text.

Aspects of the language used were observed, including vocabulary, resources of simplification and explanation, coherence, cohesion, and other perspectives necessary for the text to be understandable (Van Dijk, 1990), one of the primary conditions for there to be a rational argumentative debate. We also sought to eliminate explicit markers of power hierarchy and asymmetry and the tendency towards informality in languages, aspects that indicate a movement towards democratization (FAIRCLOUGH, 2001).

In terms of resources that favour comprehensibility, most of the posts' texts demonstrate an effort of the collective mandate to use a relatively accessible vocabulary that facilitates reading by the public, with adequate coherence and cohesion to the attribution of meanings.

In most posts, the texts are short and objective, a characteristic format for disseminating social networks information. All have an attracting title, written in capital letters, which introduces the subject addressed in the post, followed by images, links, or videos. There are also texts with a large amount of information, such as financial statements and performed activities. In such cases, the authors'

option for using intertitles is considered necessary, which contributes to the organization of information, makes reading lighter and allows the reader to locate the subjects quickly dealt with in the text.

Figures of speech are also present in some texts, building a connotative sense. This resource can help in understanding by drawing the reader's attention to the creativity of the connections and making the reading more enjoyable: "Do you want to get your hands dirty to make this school better and more beautiful for young children?" / "Today was the day to see a smile shine brighter. Day to see the seeds of words meet the fertile soil of those who have a taste for reading." (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2018, our translation)

In some texts, the mistaken use of punctuation in the construction of sentences has been identified, making cognition difficult at the time of interpretation. For example, in the following excerpt, the absence of adequate punctuation harms understanding, even if it does not eliminate intelligibility.

The excess of abandoned, sick or owner animals that live on the street has caused several impacts in the municipality. Among the main ones are packs that attack wild animals and people riding bicycles and urban cleaning problems. Many dogs check the garbage from garbage dumps, causing inconvenience to some residents, among others (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019, our translation).

Spelling errors were also observed, as in the following excerpts: "(...) according to geomorphological and geological characteristics. / Does our city have a "watter reserve" considering the population growth that will occur" (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019, our translation). Such errors seem to originate from typing errors and not from ignorance of the correct spelling since there is no repetition of mistakes in other passages.

We note that punctuation and spelling mistakes are rare occurrences in the sample texts and do not compromise the post's subject's global understanding.

There are posts on the CMAPG Facebook page that, if analyzed in isolation, lack contextualization elements that contribute to the reader's understanding of who does not live in Alto Paraíso de Goiás or who has not followed previous events. It is the case with the clarification note published on September 28, 2019:

A lawsuit for civil reparation has already been filed for the lies and offences of Mr Roberto Naborfazan (responsible for the newspaper 'O Vetor') against Councilman João Yuji. We will not lower ourselves to insults and lies on social networks, and we will discuss the matter in greater detail in the Judiciary. (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019, our translation).

In the excerpt above, the issuer considers the reader had access to the newspaper's content as mentioned above and presents the information as "lies and offences" without justifying the reason for considering them as such. The post also informs that the subject will not be discussed on social networks, but in the Judiciary, an action that makes it difficult for the reader to follow it up. Although it presents a certain degree of transparency - it seeks to inform the public that the

CMAPG is promoting a lawsuit against the person responsible for the newspaper - it does not contextualize the reader on the subject, making it difficult to understand the text.

There is a lack of contextualization when there is a reference to places and events in the municipality, making it difficult for those who do not know the city well or do not follow the page regularly. It is the case of the post of December 6, 2019: "Historic moment in Alto Paraíso! Finally, there is competition for Solomon!" (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019, our translation). When we analyze only the text of this post, we realize that there is a great difficulty for a reader who is not a citizen of Alto Paraíso de Goiás, or a recent resident, to understand the message. In this case, the text complements an image corresponding to a gas station's announcement, which requires a particular mental effort from the reader to make a connection between the name "Salomão" and a gas station. And, by using the expression "historical moment", the reader again assume that "Salomão" was, until that date, the only establishment of the type existing in the municipality.

Those who have followed the page and all the previously released posts are more likely to understand the information. In three previous chronological moments, CMAPG historically contextualizes the process that resulted in opening a new gas station in the city. Considering that not all page followers can follow all posts so that the information could be disseminated more clearly in the position we analyzed above, the issuer should return to this contextualization that he had done at other times.

Despite the problems identified and reported above, they are uncommon. In most posts, there is an effort by the Collective Mandate to use contextualization resources that contribute to the comprehensibility of the texts.

The cause-consequence relationship is one of those resources that appear frequently and presents the reader with the reason why a particular action occurs:

Given the arrival of two bills from a councillor to change street names (these are the first bills authored by councillors that are not ours), this October, we present a Bill that aims to attribute to competence to define street names for street residents themselves. Thus avoiding the Chamber to continue deliberating on street names, which diverts the councillors' work's focus. The initiative also aims to encourage the appropriation and accountability of residents for the public space. (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2017, our translation)

In the excerpt above, it is understood that the fact that a councillor presented bills to change street names (cause) caused CMAPG to introduce a new bill (consequence) so that the competence to choose street names becomes to be from the residents of that place. The resource acts as a justification for the group's action and contributes to contextualizing the fact.

The cause-consequence relationship also contributes to contextualize the subject and brings clarity to the reader in the following excerpt:

In the studies related to the reform of the municipality's tax code, our Councilman João Yuji found that the rate used for the collection of the IPTU (Property Tax) of Alto Paraíso is higher than that provided for in the law and that all taxpayers who are unduly

charged are entitled to a refund of the excess amounts [ ...]  
(COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019, our translation)

The text above shows why (cause) the taxpayers of Alto Paraíso are entitled to a refund of part of the tax (consequence) amount improperly charged by the city hall. The cause-consequence relationship helps the reader to understand that restitution is a right and can be collected from the city hall.

Historically presenting the subject to be addressed was also a contextualization resource observed in the sample:

The Guardianship Council was created by Law 8,069, of July 13, 1990. It is a municipal and permanent body responsible for protecting children and adolescents' rights, regulated by the Municipal Law No. 809/2008 in Alto Paraíso. Formed by five members elected by the community for a three-year term, the Guardianship Council has functional autonomy; that is, it is not subordinate to any other state agency.

The 5 (five) Guardian Counselor positions will take place on October 6, from 8 am to 5 pm, at the Zeca de Faria School. To vote is necessary to bring an Identification Document (with a photo) and a voter registration card. The population must seek to know who the candidates are, their proposals, and make a conscious and responsible choice to elect the Guardianship Council. The elected representatives will be responsible for dealing with children and adolescents at risk in the municipality for the years to come. (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019, our translation)

The issuer uses the guardianship council creation history, so the reader understands that the organ is already consolidated in the municipality and presents its functions. This contextualization serves as a basis for information about the elections for the guardianship counsellor's positions and the appeal made by the issuer for the population to make "a conscious and responsible choice".

We can say that the sample collected on Facebook from CMAPG presents one of the contemporary trends that, according to Fairclough (2001), affect the discourse - democratization. Within this perspective, the trend towards informal languages is an aspect that marks the texts. They are texts that use, in many moments, a colloquial language, relatively simple, and with elements that bring the public closer and contribute to reducing the possibility of inequalities in the apprehension of the contents at the moment of reading.

Besides, common expressions and common neologisms in oral communication also appear in the excerpts: "Next Friday, 10/26/2018, at 7 pm, our councilman will make an open **talk** (...)" / "The students organized everything, educators and the EHC community, who even made **pizzas** to collect the total value of the trip (...) "/" (...) They are talking **sooo much** about it and how it impacts some places, discussing whether fine or regularize and how the inspection will be done after the Master Plan."/ (...) The idea is to set up more libraries in the dozens of surrounding communities, which do not yet have a library. **WILL YOU GO INTO THIS WAVE?**" (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2018; 2019; our translation; emphasis added).

The elimination of explicit markers of hierarchy and power asymmetry is also common in the sample. Some posts approach the phenomenon of conversation and place the reader as an active part of the text's situation. The use of resources with more extraordinary dialogical potential places the issuer speaking directly to the public. With markers that identify the reader and/or include him in the conversation, as we can see in: "If you are one of the people who are buying land in the countryside and compartments the soil (slicing the ground with friends), you should be concerned and attend the master plan meetings. (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019, our translation)"

In the post above, the issuer identifies the reader - the one "who is buying land in the countryside and compartments the soil" and makes an alert that promotes the reflection of the same. In addition to involving him directly in the discourse, he invites him to act as a citizen and participate in the meetings.

In the following excerpt, there is also the identification of who the reader is. This time, the resident of Alto Paraíso who is not yet a voter in the municipality: "If you live in Alto Paraíso and have not yet transferred your voter registration card to the Municipality, do so as soon as possible, as the deadline for transferring the title to be able to vote in next year's elections is running out [...]" (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019, our translation)

The questions use also suggests dialogue in some texts, helping the audience to interact mentally with the speech, or nonetheless, there are comments in the post. In the excerpts below, the issuer uses questions to provoke the reader to reflect on a subject that he considers necessary, the participation of the citizens of Alto Paraíso in the meetings that deal with the municipal master plan: "You know that lack of leisure spaces that young people so much claim? It can be looked at and planned through the master plan."/"How are questions about new subdivisions? The Master Plan also covers this."/"Where can São Jorge grow to?"/"Building with more than three floors in Alto Paraíso? Do you think it's bad? Better to keep an eye on the meetings" (COLLECTIVE MANDATE ALTO PARAÍSO, 2019, our translation).

As a basis for the analysis of the clarity aspect, it is possible to state that most texts are understandable to the general public, presenting the content objectively and using resources that contribute to the assimilation by the reader, such as figures of speech, historical contextualization and through the cause-consequence correlation. There is also a group effort to place the reader as an active part in the situation addressed in the text, approaching dialogue, which can be considered a tendency to eliminate explicit markers of hierarchy and power asymmetry, one of the factors that the discourse tends towards democratization. The language informality, another tendency aspect towards democratization, also marks the texts, uses colloquial language, is relatively simple, and with elements that bring the public closer and reduce the possibility of inequalities in the apprehension of the contents time of reading. The comprehensibility is one of the claims of validity pointed out by Habermas (2012) as essential to the argumentative process, and the quality of information is decisive for online deliberative processes, as recalled by Rothberg (2010), when talking about the need to provide comprehensive information and interpretations to support the analysis of Internet users.

## Usefulness of information

The third aspect of the analysis of the Information Quality criterion refers to the actors' utility. We observed that 52.7% of the posts are aimed at encouraging citizenship, and social control, including campaigns to transfer the voter's title to the municipality, with explanations of how to do it, and signature collections for popular initiative bills; mobilizations for improvements in the city - joint efforts to fill in the cracks in the streets or to structure libraries in communities, for example -; guidance on municipal services, events in the region and rights to be claimed, such as refund of part of the taxes charged improperly, including a form to make the request; disclosure about the City Council's routine, calling for sessions and hearings, and informing about the legislative projects processed in the House; and disclosure about Executive acts, both demanding transparency, positions and encouraging the population of the city to achieve this social control.

Although 47.3% of the posts deal with CMAPG activities, most of them have information related to transparency, such as balances about the group's activities in the municipality, expenses, in addition to the drafting of projects and laws and other legislative actions. This information is also relevant to Alto Paraíso citizens, who are taxpayers and have the right to follow what their representatives do.

In only 8.2% of the total sample, the CMAPG expresses opinions about politics and other municipality issues. However, we believe that even this information has valuable content for Alto Paraíso and people from different locations interested in innovative political practices. The posts help the reader to understand the ideological bases that underlie the initiative and its political directions. In some moments even, CMAPG reports its experiences in collective management, giving suggestions to other groups that wish to launch applications in this format.

Of the total posts in the sample, only 5.8% correspond to the 2016 political campaign, explaining the collective mandate's proposals, presentation of the actors involved and the number of votes, the usual content of the electoral period.

We believe that the information disclosed is of considerable use to the municipality's citizens, as it is, in large part, aimed at encouraging more participatory citizenship.

## Cross-cutting spaces

It is possible to observe CMAPG members' participation in different spaces that cross sectors to integrate other views. In addition to the sessions of the Legislative Chamber of Alto Paraíso, members are active in public hearings, fairs, forums, and conversation circles, in addition to civil society councils. We identified the group's participation in the Municipal Council for the Environment Defense (Comdema), the Municipal Council for Tourism (Comtur), the Municipal Council for Education (CME), and the Advisory Council for the Environmental Protection Area of Pouso Alto (Conapa), which encompasses six municipalities in the Chapada dos Veadeiros region, and the National Confederation of Municipalities (NCM).

The CMAPG's attempt to establish a legal centre in the municipality was also identified, employing courses in drafting law projects and direct classes open to the

community, encouraging citizens to draw laws and promote lawsuits that did not depend on a lawyer.

#### *The plurality of the promoter group*

The leadership sharing in the CMAPG is a strategy foreseen in an agreement, registered in a notary office, signed by all the actors who started the project. Even though João Yuji was the official councillor in the 2017-2020 electoral process, he took his votes in plenary at the City Council based on consensus among all members and, if the resolution did not reach an agreement, would vote by the will of the majority.

Within the group, each representative has a defined responsibility based on their technical and professional skills and can also act in other areas. Initiatives can come from any member. The person in charge of a given topic is responsible for informing the group about the issues in question in the municipality and preparing projects and proposals related to that area.

The CMAPG agreement foresees that members have to deliberate and seek consensus on new members' entry and the application of the councillor's allowance in matters of common interest to the city's citizens.

We identified that the initial distribution of functions among the members is not plastered. CMAPG underwent a reorganization of responsibilities, with adjustment of the positions of each member. There was also an attempt to open up leadership sharing with new members and form targeted workgroups for the CMAPG. Campaigns were also initiated to train successors of the municipality's initiative, with the group committing itself to support collective candidacies with prior preparations for work, political support, and votes in the 2020 election. These factors demonstrate a tendency for the group to expand the actors that can be ahead of the collective. However, until the end of 2019, there was no increase in CMAPG members, though it had volunteered for some activities. It can be said that the deliberations for decision-making on votes in plenary and administrative matters remained restricted to the initial five members.

#### *Existing agencies and monitoring agencies*

It can be said that the CMAPG uses an existing agency in the municipality to carry out its activities, officially occupying a seat in the Legislature and using the physical structure of the place. Its internal system is based on the division of functions among the members and formally contemplates the legislative, legal, cultural, environmental, education, tourism, and trade areas. Nobody or structure monitors the entire process, from drafting to filing the proposal or bill. However, due to the wide dissemination of the group's acts and the formal document that provides how the process is conducted, there is a relationship of trust between the actors that the councillor will take to the plenary deliberately participatory.

#### *Relationship with other participatory processes*

CMAPG's interaction with participatory systems that already exist in the region occurs in different ways: through support in the dissemination of actions; for financial aid, with amounts from the councillor's subsidy; for technical support in the elaboration of projects; for political support for similar initiatives; and partnerships to hold activities in the municipality.

The group shows itself to be engaged in local campaigns promoted by other members of the civil society, as is the case of the SALVAR volunteer network, which takes care of abandoned animals, the Firefighting Network, which works to combat fires in Chapada dos Veadeiros, and the NGO Forest Friends, in awareness activities in defence of wild fauna in the region.

The collaboration was also identified in events with a proposal for collective action, such as joint efforts to revitalize squares and educational institutions, both in disseminating and executing activities. CMAPG also finances, allocating financial resources received in the councillor's allowance, promoting local farmers' markets, and traditional cultural meetings, such as the Raizeiros, Midwives, folk healer, and shaman Meeting in Chapada dos Veadeiros and the Crowned Terezas event.

In addition to CMAPG members' participation as members of the aforementioned municipal councils, the group uses its dissemination channels to publicize other committees' activities. The sample identified information on the election of representatives for the Guardianship Council and the elaboration and dissemination of a public calendar of the municipal councils, including the meetings' dates, to encourage society's participation.

CMAPG technically supports the drafting of popular initiative bills and the gathering of signatures. It was identified that the group supported the writing of texts and created lists of three initiatives in this format, managing to finalize the gathering of signatures and file one of the proposals. The amendment to the Organic Law of the Municipality 001/2019 so that residents with voter registration in Alto Paraíso de Goiás pay a maximum of 50% of the entrance fee to the natural attractions of the municipality.

Politically, a declared manifestation of support for two initiatives was observed similar to the group's proposal, one from Brasília and the other from Cotia, in the 2018 elections.

## 6 Final considerations

We believe that the purpose mobilized by our research problem has been achieved: to identify whether, in the process of a discussion carried out by the CMAPG with the population of Alto Paraíso de Goiás, an intersubjective and communicative space that enables the understanding of the social actors involved and can favour deliberative citizenship in practice and local development. We evaluated that the study of the posts, based on SMSP' criteria (VILLELA, 2012) for the analysis of deliberative citizenship, demonstrated the current panorama in the group's discussion process in that municipality.

We can say that several elements in the CMAPG discussion process contribute to deliberative citizenship in practice. The group uses different **dissemination channels**, online and offline, which make it possible to provide information to the local community and reach potential participants. Exploring the

use of the website and social networks to match a more significant number of people while still producing printed content and via local radio to inform citizens without or with little access to the internet. The media has also been an important channel for the dissemination of the collective.

As for the **information quality**, we consider that the contents released to the community present diversity in the topics covered, in the format of the media used and in the sources of information, not being restricted to the diffusion of the group's actions. The data is of considerable use to the actors involved since it aims to encourage more participatory citizenship. From the methodological proposals of the CDA, it is possible to affirm that the published texts, although they can be improved, are clear and objective, being understandable to the reader. We also note an effort by the group to use a more informal language and eliminate explicit markers of power hierarchy and asymmetry, aspects that, according to Fairclough (2001), indicate a tendency towards the democratization of discourse.

We identified that the members of CMAPG actively participate in diverse **Cross-cutting spaces**, which allow the dialogue and the integration of different points of view, such as municipal councils, public hearings, fairs, forums, and conversation circles.

In addition to sharing leadership among CMAPG members for decision-making, a proposed initiative since the candidacy to the signed contract, there was a search for new members and the formation of working groups and the incentive to construct new ones collective mandate initiatives the election. We recognize a trend towards the **plurality of the promoter group** beyond the initial team. Still, we identified that until the end of 2019, there was not an increase in the member's number.

We can say that CMAPG uses the **existing legislative agency**, avoiding duplication of structures. A **monitoring agency** to the entire deliberative process has not been identified. Still, we believe that the agreement previously signed between the members and the wide dissemination of their actions generate trust between the actors involved.

The **relationship with other existing participatory processes** in the region is one of interaction, either through support for disseminating and developing partnerships for carrying out activities in the municipality or through financial, technical, or political support. We emphasize the group's contribution to the writing and the collection of signatures of bills of popular initiative in the municipality.

In the light of Habermas' theory of deliberative democracy, we understand that the mobilization of the public sphere through discussion processes that enable the understanding of the social actors involved legitimates the political decisions (HABERMAS, 2012, 1996, 1997). And considering, for local development to be possible, it is necessary to involve a set of actors, from different segments, present in a given territory (ZANI; TENÓRIO, 2014). We believe, based on this study, that the process discussion held by the CMAPG with the population of Alto Paraíso de Goiás makes it possible, in large part, to promote deliberative citizenship and local development.

However, we recognize that it is not yet possible to state that CMAPG promotes full deliberative democracy: in addition to identifying that leadership is still shared by a restricted group, it is essential, for this understanding, to study the

other criteria suggested by SMSP (VILLELA, 2012) that consist the categories of inclusion, pluralism, participatory equality, autonomy and the common good, a proposal that will be continued by this group of researchers in future works.

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