

Public Participation in Science: The Case of Genetic Modified Organisms in Brazil

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Abstract : This paper aims to present the theories of public participation in order to understand the context of the public GMO (Genetic Modified Organisms) policies in Brazil, highlighting the characteristics of its configuration and the dialog with the experts. As a controversy subject, the commercialization of GMO provoked manifestation of some popular and environmental representative groups questioning the decisions of policy makers and experts on the matter. Many aspects and consequences of the plantation and consumption of this crops emerged and the safety of this technology was questioned. Environmentalists, Civil Right's movement, representatives of rural workers, farmers and organics producers, etc. demonstrated their point of view, also sustained by some experts of medical, genetical, environmental, agronomical sciences, etc. fields. Despite this movement, the precautionary principle (risk management), implemented in 1987, suggested precaution facing new technologies and innovations in the sustainable development society. This principle influenced many legislation and regulation on GMO around the world, including Brazil, which became a reference among the world regulatory GMO systems. The Brazilian legislation ensures the citizens participation on GMO discussion, characteristic that was important to establish the connection between the subject and the participation theory. These deliberation spaces materialized in Brazil through the "Public Audiences", which are managed by the National Biosafety Technical Commission (CTNBio), the department responsible for controlling the research, production and commercialization of GMOs in Brazil.

Keywords : public engagement, public participation, science and technology studies, transgenic politics

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