



The political project and governance capacities

El proyecto político y las capacidades de gobierno

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ABSTRACT This article presents a theoretical overview of personal and institutional governance capacities (experience, leadership and knowledge on the individual level, and organizational capital available on the institutional level) and their relationship to politics and policies in the Latin American context. Using the theoretical production of Carlos Matus regarding the act of governing, diverse dimensions of this problem are put into discussion in relation to other authors and experiences in different historical moments. Theories, methods and techniques of government are explored and the need for state reform with an internal logic is analyzed. It is concluded that there is a need to build a theory for the practice of governing/managing public organizations, and this construction requires creative actions that use theory as a toolbox.

KEY WORDS Organizational Capacity; Management Capacity; Government; Management; Policy; State Reform.

RESUMEN En este trabajo se realiza una revisión teórica sobre las capacidades de gobierno personales (experiencia, liderazgo y conocimiento) y las capacidades de gobierno institucionales (capital organizativo disponible) y su relación con lo político y las políticas en el contexto de América Latina. A partir de la producción teórica de Carlos Matus sobre la acción de gobernar, se ponen en discusión diversas dimensiones de esta problemática, las que se relacionan con otros autores y experiencias de diferentes momentos históricos. Se desarrollan teorías, métodos y técnicas de gobierno y se analiza la necesidad de la reforma del Estado desde una lógica interna. Se concluye en la necesidad de construir una teoría para la práctica de gobernar/gestionar las organizaciones públicas. Esa construcción requiere de acciones creativas que utilicen la teoría como caja de herramientas.

PALABRAS CLAVES Capacidad Organizacional; Capacidades de Gestión; Gobierno; Gestión; Políticas; Reforma del Estado.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the 1970s oil crisis, theoretical developments began to appear that called into question the Welfare State and introduced the concept of the “political market,” identifying what they considered a “State overload,” wherein the more services a State provided, the more its population would expect those services to be provided (1-2). These critiques constituted the so-called “welfare pluralism” model (1). Alongside these developments the theory of a “legitimacy crisis” emerged (3-5), which defended State intervention and acknowledged the need for greater government funding to attend to those demands (6).

Toward the end of 1980, guided by the concept of State overload, Washington Consensus policies for Latin America promoted unilateral economic opening, free movement of capital, State downsizing, privatization of state-run enterprises, deregulation, the search for foreign direct investment, and debt. The invisible hand of the market was to become the great social organizer, and therefore a smaller State and less government presence would be required. These reforms also brought about decentralization, which implied that many individuals lacking previous experience or training would have to assume management responsibilities.

In the first decade of the 21st century in several Latin American countries State intervention returned with the emergence of a Neo-Keynesianism that seemed unthinkable considering the hegemony of monetarism. This was the result of shared interests of countries such as Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, and Ecuador (as well as other countries later on), and reverted the widespread logic of the Washington Consensus; a larger State and more government presence were needed. However, beyond the indisputable progress and advancements achieved by these countries and the region in general, the difficulties that have been faced by members of these governments in carrying out their political projects are undeniable. On one hand they are confronted with powerful interests, and on the other they may struggle after taking office with low levels of institutional governance capacities (organizational capital available) and/or personal governance

capacities (knowledge + experience + leadership), which may have an impact either separately or in conjunction with each other (7).

THE POLITICAL, POLITICS, AND GOVERNANCE

Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe has highlighted the difference between the concepts of politics and “the political” (8). For Mouffe, “the political” (on an ontological level, referring to the essence of something) is related to power, conflict, and antagonism, whereas politics (on the ontic level, referring to its empirical characteristics) is related to the practices and institutions that define certain purposes with the aim of constructing or retaining hegemony. For Mouffe, “the political” is crucial to understanding the dynamics of history and the construction of democracy, thus differing from the conception of the political developed by “dominant rationalist approaches in democratic theories” (8 p.16).

The changes that have taken place in Latin America in recent decades have made it possible to envision the political as the conceptual core of the historical moment, and from there design policies that would inevitably require governance capacities – both personal and institutional – for their implementation. This article is organized around these relationships, from a perspective that affirms that “the political” should be granted the highest level of hierarchy.

In the 19th century, Saint-Simon observed the need to shift from the government of men to the administration of things (9). Near the end of the same century, Porfirio Díaz, seven times president of Mexico, proclaimed the need for “less politics, more administration.” These ideas still persist in technocratic viewpoints, which deny the importance of “the political” and limit all solutions to the realm of management. Diametrically opposed to this conception, some academic and political spheres prioritize “the political” over the managerial. This creates a false dichotomy, since separating politics from the act of governing places politics within a “should be” logic, thus underestimating that governance/management (a) is one way of realizing “the political” through policies,

in a game with multiple actors that define the “could be” logic. Confusing the “should be” with the “could be” is a sign of political miscalculation (10). This idea was identified by novelist Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) when he stated, “writing laws is easy, but governing is difficult” (12 p.468).

The dilemmas surrounding these concepts can only be maintained at a high level of abstraction that forgoes considering that “the political,” politics, government, and management are elements of a continuum in constant dialogue with one another. None of them in isolation can ensure the realization of a political project. If these ideas persist we might bear witness to the accumulation of critical capacities without the creation of transformative capacities, restricting ourselves to criticism without allowing for the possibility of transforming reality, perpetuating our own prophecies. The ability to combine a critical attitude with critical aptitude is of utmost importance (13).

The political changes that have taken place in Latin America have forced many activists to undertake the difficult and complex task of governing/managing (b). These experiences compelled them to “learn” – at times under unpleasant circumstances – that convictions do not always correspond to means and that in order to govern/manage it is not always enough to be honest, smart, charismatic, a good speaker, or to have good intentions, political experience, or the appropriate discourse for the historical moment. It does not take long to discover that not everything is attributable to the “hefty inheritance” of previous administrations, but that a lack of governance capacities vies with that inheritance, often seen as the root of all evil. These deficiencies affect the fulfillment of electoral promises and create feelings of frustration among diverse social groups (frequently expressed through sentiments such as “they are all the same”) who consequently discredit “the political.” The 2001 crisis in Argentina and the current Indignant Citizens Movement in the Eurozone are clear examples of these patterns.

In other words, the political is an expression of the conflicts of interest that result from the different positions occupied by diverse actors in the social space; but in democratic systems winning an election poses another challenge: that of governance/management, which may shed light on the relative lack of capacity in implementing policies

formulated from the framework of “the political” (c). This is not related specifically to conflicts of interest, but refers to a cognitive conflict. This begs the question as to why governance capacities are considered a cognitive conflict in this perspective: precisely because there is a gap between discursive and practical consciousness (14).

When an opposition group comes to power, a fearful “day after” scenery emerges that reveals the reality that political capital (15) does not necessarily guarantee personal or institutional governance capacities, a notion that is rarely considered before assuming a political position. In general more attention is paid to “the political,” and while this is to be expected given its importance, it does not justify ignoring the centrality of governance capacities.

The ideal types developed by Weber in the essays “Politics as a Vocation” and “Science as a Vocation” (16) are still valid to describe their dominant features, but restricting the discussion to this dichotomy would be a mistake, given that it implies ignoring the technical and political dimensions of governing/managing.

It is necessary to place the governance capacities of those who will be in charge of implementing policies at the forefront of the agenda, regardless of their profession or level of educational attainment, given that both university graduates and non-graduates share the same deficits. These deficiencies should be overcome via attendance at “governance schools” before exercising executive responsibilities (10). Although the argument here is not that they will learn everything they need in such institutions – especially considering the richness of knowledge that can be attained through practical experience – they will at least become acquainted with various issues, exercise skills, and share their reflections with other actors who have had the experience of governing/managing, such that they might learn about the particularities and complexities they can expect encounter. These institutions must be spaces for training rather than indoctrination lacking critical reflection.

The literature produced in Latin America on the act of governing is largely descriptive, either related to particular governments or to the implementation of public policies. Similarly, the production of literature detailing proposals is also very limited when it comes to governance capacities, especially if we do not take into account

the proposals related to the logic of State reform espoused by neoliberalism. A search of the two main open access databases of scientific publications in Latin America – the Online Scientific Electronic Library (SciELO) and Network of Scientific Journals of Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal (Redalyc) – which referenced selected terms gave the results seen in Table 1.

The data shown in Table 1 reveal a thematic weakness in Latin American scientific publications with respect to governance capacities, mainly in relation to aspects that consider the “what to do” and the “how to do it,” which are expressed through such terms as governance capacities, governance techniques, and governance schools. On the other hand, a greater number of publications were found that related to visions of how things “ought to be” represented by terms such as government, public policies, and State reform. The search results supported – in the opinion expressed here – what has been described above as a false dilemma between politics and governing. A special mention should be given the to terms leadership and governance, both which were widely used in the second generation of State reform (d) promoted by the multinational credit agencies during 1990s.

TESTIMONIES ON THE ACT OF GOVERNING

Throughout history, there have been numerous accounts of the complexities related to the act of governing that refer to deficits in governance capacity.

Two 16th-century thinkers concerned with the formation of political leaders come to mind: Niccoló Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536). Machiavelli, in chapter XXV of his 1513 work *The Prince* (20), pointed out that while fortune may govern one half of our actions, the other half depends on our actions and therefore we must take control of it. For him, the mission of any ruler is to ensure the happiness of their subjects, and this can only be guaranteed through the presence of a strong State. He adds that if necessary the ruler will have to resort to shrewdness, deception, or cruelty in order for

Table 1. Number of publications in SciELO (n=367,441) and Redalyc (n=228,397) based on selected terms. May 2012.

Terms	SciELO ^a	Redalyc ^b	Total
Governance capacities	17	3	20
Governance techniques	34	0	34
Leadership	397	324	721
Governance schools	25	1	26
Government	1.390	587	1.977
Governance	115	129	244
Public policies	2.308	584	2.892
State reform	191	78	269

Source: Own elaboration using SciELO and Redalyc.

a. Integrated search method, regional base.

b. Key word search method.

that happiness to be achieved. While he considers the means to be unimportant and morality to be unnecessary, what is important is practical realism, given that he regards politics and morality as two different and even contradictory spheres (20). Even today this work is referenced within the corporate sector as a guide for running an organization. In 1516, Erasmus of Rotterdam published *The Education of a Christian Prince* – dedicated to Charles V – where he dealt with the purpose that a prince’s education must serve. This vision contrasted with Machiavelli’s conception as it emphasized the need to educate the prince on the basis of peace and justice (21).

In Russia in the second half of the 18th century, Catherine the Great (1729-1796) commented the following to Diderot, relevant Enlightenment figure and her adviser in the Russian Empire:

(...) I am very pleased to hear what your brilliant spirit has inspired, but with those great principles, which I understand very well, beautiful books will be written but poor work will be done. In your plans for reform, you forget the difference between our respective positions: you work on paper, which can bear anything; it is a unified, flexible substance that does not pose obstacles to your imagination and quill. While I, poor empress, work on human skin, which is much more irritable and ticklish. (22 p.243) [Own translation]

In his 1758 book *Discourse on Political Economy*, Jean Jacques Rousseau stated, “nature has made a multitude of good fathers of families; but it is doubtful whether, from the very beginning of the world, human wisdom has made ten men capable of governing their peers” (23 p.15). John Adams, the second president of the United States, said in 1917, “while all other sciences have advanced, that of government is at a standstill – little better understood, little better practiced now than three or four thousand years ago” (7 p.13).

At the beginning of the 1980s, paying tribute to Salvador Allende, Carlos Matus wrote:

...believe me, Mr. President, that your heroism has saved you from the shame of seeing many who once seemed examples of loyalty run towards the opposite side of the ideals that they professed, dogmatism has been replaced by confusion. We live in the midst of two great confusions, that while costly when taken separately, prove disastrous when combined. The first is an ideological crisis; the second, a poverty of the methods of government. (24 p.12) [Own translation]

After the Banco Ambrosiano bankruptcy scandal in 1982, Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, head of the Vatican Bank for 18 years, was quoted as saying: “You can’t run the Church on Hail Marys” (25). This is not the only example we can cite of men belonging to this institution. Cardinal Richelieu’s (1585-1642) pragmatism was far from the proclaimed Christian mercy. The same can be said of his successor Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661), who in 1642 wrote *The Politician’s Breviary*, a text in which he acknowledged the complexity of State administration, and in which he also advised that there should be no hesitation in seizing power solely through the manipulation of consensus if this guarantees the ability to govern (26).

Reflections on the complexity of governing do not belong entirely to the past or to first world countries. In 2010, after assuming the Presidency of Uruguay, “Pepe” Mujica declared:

We discovered that governing was much more difficult than we thought, tax resources are finite and social demands countless, bureaucracy has a life of its own and

macroeconomics has unpleasant but compulsory rules. (27) [Own translation]

That same year in a speech given at the ceremony commemorating the 10th anniversary of the creation of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, then president of Brazil Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva stated, “we found out after coming to power that there is a fundamental difference between what a leader has dreamed of throughout life and what has been possible to achieve during their term of office” (28). Later that year, the current president of Brazil Dilma Rouseff observed, “being president is like climbing Mount Everest every day” (29). Fabiana Ríos, the current governor of Tierra del Fuego, was quoted at the beginning of her first term in the middle of a serious economic crisis as saying “running a province is like going through childbirth, but every day” (30).

Such accounts are not only common at the macro-level of government but also in institutional administration at the meso- and micro-levels of government, where the following types of phrases are often heard: “management is like swimming against the tide”; “no matter how hard I try nothing happens”; “I feel like a fire-fighter putting out fires”; “I spend my time trying to plug holes”; “at the end of the day, I don’t leave my job, I run away!”

Therefore, this raises various questions such as: why do dreams become nightmares, how does government become misgovernment, and how does management become turmoil? Is this just an issue of power? What incidence do governance capacities have? Is there cognitive conflict?

GOVERNANCE CAPACITIES AND COGNITIVE CONFLICT

In order to understand the relationship between the two concepts discussed in this section, it is necessary to engage and deconstruct the predominant model of knowledge, that is to say, the hegemonic rationality that permeates the discourses and practices particular to modernity.

It is not difficult to demonstrate that ideological differences among political parties are more pronounced during electoral processes than during regular term periods (10,24,31). Why is this?

Because they are confronted by powerful actors that were not considered in election promises (leading to the emergence of conflicts of interest related to “the political”). But not everything can be reduced to conflicts of interest; regardless of ideologies, cognitive conflicts that objectify social issues are also present (as in a subject-object relationship that negates “the other”), in which problems are considered to be simplistic, situations are taken as pre-defined and unchangeable, and thinking is structured according to solutions and not problems. The origins of this conception, expressed for example in the policy planning of the 1960s (32), has its epistemological base in the Cartesian conception of the subject and the ensuing developments by Kant, who believed that reason establishes the laws of nature (33). Therefore, reality does not matter because it is constructed by humanity, a clear expression of the idealist framework that underscores university education and which is reduced to the administration of objectives in the realm of government/management, instead of an understanding of reality as government “of” the people as well as “with” people.

In this way, those who govern tend to think and act as single players, regarding others as mere spectators, ignoring the most obvious aspect of the game in question: that everyone plays! Sports journalist Dante Panzeri defined soccer in the 1960s according to the “dynamics of the unexpected” (34). However, the “game” of government/management – infinitely more complex than soccer – is still being taught in universities as though it were a predictable process able to be planned using a technical rationality. It takes time for those who govern to understand that everyone plays this game (24), and when they finally grasp this concept, it is not uncommon that they come to feel that everyone is playing except for them. In short, neither politicians nor technocrats are unaware of what they do not know, and in these negative circularities, they do what they know: university-trained professionals will focus on their areas of expertise, while politicians will gain experience in “politics” (10,24).

However, it is not just that the possession of specialized professional knowledge is insufficient to govern; the experience of politicians is also usually inadequate to help them deal with the majority of problems faced while governing. On many

occasions, the inability to implement policies becomes the main obstacle for a government. It is no coincidence that public administration is generally seen as being disappointing, of low quality, not focused on people’s problems, possessing a low effort/outcome equation, and yet at the same time no one knows how to improve it (7,10).

Many political leaders continue to think that while it is easy to govern, what is really difficult is winning elections, and this may or may not be the case depending on the aim pursued. Similarly, this cannot be resolved by eliminating political parties, by transposing management techniques taught in business schools, or by calling on people from the business world – as some believe to be the case, demonstrating a complete ignorance of the particularities of public administration – nor can it be resolved by reading one of the abundant bestsellers on the topic found on the shelves of book stores (7,35).

Politics without science is religion (24), but science also needs politics (36,37) since problems are neither solely technical nor solely political, but have technical and political aspects (24). Continuing in this direction would prevent confusing governance capacity with a Master’s of Business Administration (a technical barbarism) or falling into the political barbarism of confounding governance capacities with “back-scratching” [*rosca*], government projects with “hot air” [*verso*], and governability with “trade-offs” [*poroteo*] (e). These modes of thinking form part of the vocabulary commonly associated with symbolic capital in politics (15).

Matus argues that government/management involves processing problems which he defines as the difference between the observed and the desired situation as perceived by individual or collective actors. These actors interpret any given situation from the point of view of their interests as adverse, unsatisfactory, and avoidable (31). A situation that cannot be problematized is then naturalized, and therefore functional to the status quo. While the logic of linear causality places emphasis on the notion of solutions, very appropriate for simple problems (in which all variables and relationships among them are known), it is less frequently useful for facing the challenges of governing, where the problems that must be resolved are complex in nature (most variables

and the relationships among them are unknown and they can change over time). Thus, problems constitute the *primus movens* and “raw material” of politics, and any elected official or manager who complains about their existence demonstrates a lack of understanding of the dynamics of this “game.” Certainly some precautions must be taken; for example if recurring problems arise, there must be some consideration of whether or not “norms” regulating certain procedures should be designed. However, if the problems themselves are constantly changing, some consideration should be given to the instability of the context in which they emerge, and the possibility that proposing “norms” in order to overcome them might constitute a costly mistake. In the event that new problems emerge on a daily basis and escalate in magnitude, it is very likely that the scope of the situation is expanding, and therefore the chances of confronting more powerful actors become higher. This can lead to a weakening of the viability of the project in question, for which precautions must be taken (such as building power, obtaining higher levels of legitimacy, or creating alliances). Nonetheless, these actions do not amount to a retrogression, as the possibility must be considered that the continuity of any project may not be linear but contradictory, and consequently it will be essential to take up the “strength vs. consistency” dilemma, in which an increase in strength will entail to some degree a loss of consistency and vice versa (38). This dilemma must not be ignored when attempting to construct hegemony.

If problems constitute the focus of the process of government/management, a way of resolving them must be sought while avoiding political suicide in the process. Paraphrasing General George Patton, “the aim of war is not to die for your country but to make the enemy die for his” (39 p.13). With this sentiment, an attempt is made to avoid the quixotic logic of “tilting at windmills” commonly present in Hispanic cultures (40), and to discourage the vocation for martyrdom and replace it with a relational mode of thinking and acting.

Those who govern/manage often have the sensation that their task is endless, since unlike manual labor it is very difficult to feel that something has been accomplished at the end of the day, as there is always something left pending or

some problem to be resolved. These actors must understand that their work involves interrelated networks of problems that are almost impossible to separate from one another, which Russell Ackoff has called “messes” or “systems of problems” (41 p.36). This is not the product of supernatural intervention nor is it the incarnation of the myth of Sisyphus (f), but rather results from the characteristics of working with complex social problems rising from the conflicts of interests of diverse actors/agents (g). Complex problems are characterized by the fact that once they are addressed, a new situation always arises which may be more or less complex. In other words, their resolutions constitute situations: good for some, bad for others. As a result, it is rare that complex problems disappear entirely; the result is generally a transformation of the problems in which a new situation – more or less complex than the previous one – will materialize.

Being able to overcome the cognitive conflict implies recognition that the act of governing is contained within relational processes – inter-subjective interactions – and as is the case in all relational processes the possibility of creation and/or conflict exists, as well as the influence of the symbolic dimensions of action (verbal and non-verbal languages). In synthesis, reality is relational and therefore leaves no room for the principle of substantiality linked to common sense, which considers the activities of people or groups to be substantial properties that are permanently fixed, while the concepts of “social space” and “trajectories” developed by Pierre Bourdieu (43) are overlooked.

This cognitive conflict is supported by a matrix that includes both “the real” and “the imaginary,” but ignores or minimizes the value of the symbolic (44). Thus, subjects are taken as Cartesian entities, and leaders see themselves as such and imagine their teams in the same way (7), ignoring the negative circularity leading to five false assumptions (45):

- The assumption that the individuals are subjects of pure reason as described by Descartes, consequently ignoring that in fact they are barred subjects who do not acknowledge a part of themselves (subjects of the unconscious), omitting theoretical developments that conceptualize individuals as complex subjects capable

- of thinking but also of loving, hating, crying, becoming depressed, or experiencing indifference (46). Even in the state of consciousness of the Cartesian subject that we associate with *homo sapiens*, we must recognize – as Sartre highlights – that we are not just *sapient*, but also *seen by others* (47).
- The assumption that organizations are pyramids, ignoring theoretical developments such as the “Theory of Macro-organizations” (35) and “Professional Bureaucracy” (48).
 - The assumption that workers only carry out manual labor when in many cases their work processes center on the symbolic domain (verbal and nonverbal language).
 - The assumption that the objective of government/management is to plan, and therefore its tasks are organized, focused, and linear, ignoring the fact that the day-to-day work of management involves chaotic, unpredictable, and disorderly situations (49).
 - The assumption that goods are produced (a logic of production, circulation, and consumption), when the majority of production is related to services (which are consumed at the point of production) (50).

Practices related to the act of governing may be associated with what Bourdieu calls “knowledge without concepts” (43). This is not very different from what happens at the managerial level in the business world. Mintzberg states that business managers often are not doing what they would like to think they are doing (49). In his doctoral thesis, *The nature of managerial work* – written at the beginning of 1970s – he describes managers as slaves to the moment, progressing from task to task, and under the constant pressure of urgent daily necessities, all of which are far from the ideal of devoting time to the planning of long-term actions. Thus, the average time spent on any specific issue is no more than nine minutes. Mintzberg described the characteristics of managerial work in the following way (it should be noted that he is referring to the world of industry and business rather than the public sector) (49):

- The execution of a great number of tasks at an exasperating rhythm.
- Focus on short, varied, and fragmented activities.

- Preference for specific and urgent tasks rather than routine ones.
- Preference for verbal rather than written communication.
- Work carried out in the context of networks of internal and external contacts.
- Subject to huge limitations while being able to exercise some degree of control over tasks.

Those regularities in the practices of government/management demonstrate the existence of a model of knowledge (rationality) that possesses its own history related to structural issues (economical, political, ideological, and cultural). It is for this reason that this analysis is not limited to a characterization of a certain ideological sector or to the public sphere, since its description expresses the ontological complicity between field and *habitus* (15,42).

PERSONAL GOVERNANCE CAPACITIES

The Greeks considered it important that rulers have the capacity for governing themselves (morality) and their families (economy). These ideas were later taken up by Michel Foucault, who described the formalization of the governmentality of the State from the 18th century onwards. Foucault’s analysis included the art of governing, covering the study of the government of the self (ethics as a way of dominating pleasures and desires), the government of others (political forms of governability), and the relationship between the government of the self and the government of others, which combines experience with knowledge (51-53).

His experience in Salvador Allende’s government between 1971 and 1973 enabled Carlos Matus to understand that the complexity inherent in the act of governing/managing had been underestimated during planning processes (24). When he was released after three years of prison during Pinochet’s dictatorship, he became a consultant for the United Nations and later the president of the ALTADIR [from the Spanish *alta dirección*, or high governance] foundation. These positions allowed him to advise governments of different political extractions at the national, provincial, and municipal levels in several Latin American countries. During these years, he

was able to confirm how weak governing capacities constituted a limitation to the fulfillment of political promises. Therefore, high levels of personal governance capacities combined with low levels of institutional governance capacities – or vice versa – produced poor results with respect to the political project. In this sense, three assertions made by Matus come to mind: “no government can be better than its selection of problems” (10 p.432); “a government can be no better than the organization it commands” (24 p.327); and “the office of a government official imposes a limit to the quality of public management” (7 p.163).

Matus mentions three dimensions of personal governance capacities that are further developed below, each of which will be discussed in detail: experience, leadership, and knowledge (7).

Experience

Experience is a very important element of personal governance capacity. Its distinctive feature is that it cannot be taught; it can only be acquired through practice. It is necessary to face numerous situations in order to acquire it, yet it is never completely learned given that each situation that must be addressed is unique and tied to the historical moment, the characteristics of the problems, and the teams and managers themselves, and therefore cannot be reduced to a system of norms. To synthesize, this element of governance capacity is based on a trial-error and error-trial logic articulating both its subjective and situational nature, and consequently the impossibility to achieve complete objectivity. This calls attention to the limits of academic training for political leaders, at least with respect to this element.

Mintzberg’s experience managing organizations led him to contemplate the limits of Master in Business Administration (MBA) degrees:

The idea of taking 25-year-olds – intelligent but inexperienced – without any kind of experience in management and transforming them into efficient leaders after two years of classroom training is laughable [...] It is time to put an end to traditional master’s degree programs. We should be developing real managers instead of pretending that they can

be created in university classrooms (54 p.164-165) [Own translation]

Russell Ackoff also highlights the limits of academic training when he states, “business schools obtain much better results in their instructors’ education than in students” (41 p.177). This critique is based on the conviction that it is daily practice – rather than university training – that teaches these skills. Nonetheless this implies a need for the possibility of reflecting upon practice, an area in which universities may help government officials and managers provided that they know how to do so. But in order to achieve this it is necessary to reverse the trends toward decreases in curricular content design related to information, knowledge, and comprehension (41 p.171), a curricular structure reflecting Enlightenment traditionalism rather than a constructivist viewpoint of the practices of government/management.

A lack of experience may induce the employment of a number adjectives for describing government officials: arrogant, when they disregard institutional advice; useless, when they fail at making governmental mechanisms run properly. These qualifiers – which are in some cases appropriate and in others, less so – may also refer to the struggle between the instituted and the instituting, where in general experience behaves as an instituted aspect (55). Attempts should also be made to avoid that anecdotes become the only way to capitalize on experience, struggling against the inertia of knowledge without concepts, common among government officials who gain experience but are unable separate it from the realm of the anecdotal and analyze it conceptually.

Leadership

Since its origins, the concept of leadership has been related to the idea of a “divine gift” and therefore something that some people possess and some do not. The predominant conception of leadership has changed; it is no longer considered to be a gift, but something that should be developed through teamwork and that can be acquired. Therefore it is generally preferred that this role is not limited to only one person, but should be considered as part of the potential held by most of the

members of the team, in turn developing a sense of group leadership – perhaps better thought of as “group identity” – instead of focusing on the development of an individual leader. That is to say, it is not a question of indoctrination of the majority of the group alongside the search for someone who possesses the “gift of leadership” who will be able to direct them. These ideas reaffirm what Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) observed, when in his work *The New Scientific Spirit* he declared, “it is not the being that clarifies the relationship, it is the relationship that illuminates the being” (56 p.162) [Own translation].

The theoretical developments regarding language and communication have made significant contributions to the practice of leadership. “Coaching techniques” are a clear example of this; as is the case of any trend, they offer a range of contributions, from innovative solutions to old ideas dressed in new garments. They attempt to differentiate the image of a traditional leader from this new method of leadership. In order to do so, the function of language is reconsidered, no longer limited to providing accounts of what already exists; it loses its passive and descriptive nature and is considered to be an important component of action able to generate new realities, identities, relationships, and commitments. As a result, principles of traditional leadership are questioned, such as: positions of certainty and absolute truth; talking instead of listening; asserting instead of asking; defining functions instead of delegating responsibilities; controlling instead of motivating and engaging; possessing granted authority instead of recognized authority; and keeping distance instead of developing bonds.

In synthesis, although there is a bit of “art” in leadership, no art exists without theory, and consequently becoming acquainted with that theory will improve performance and the creation of new types of leadership.

Knowledge

As discussed above, Michel Foucault has identified the 18th century as the moment of transition from the art of governing to the predominance of governance techniques that take populations as their objects, consequently

alongside the emergence of political economy (52). Despite the passing of time, Matus would say that these techniques are still weak, as his interest was not in exercising control over populations but in making the State work for the majority of citizens, which explains his efforts to develop theories, methods, and techniques of governance (7,10,24,32,35,37,38,57).

The “triangle of government” (7,10), one of the theoretical constructions developed by Matus, in its ideal form is represented by an equilateral triangle – one of the sides represents governance capacities, another the government project structured by the problems to be addressed that form part of the political promise (that is to say, the realm of the political must be present either implicitly or explicitly), and the third represents governability, the consensus among social groups regarding the project. Yet it is not common that this triangle is equilateral. Why? Because the general tendency is to concentrate only on the political project, disregarding capacities and governability – either focusing strictly on technical capacities and thereby forming sterile technical bureaucracies, or on the design of models that rely on strong consensus among social groups with no political projects or capacities to deal with the problems they face. Relationships between the political project and governability require different governance capacities.

Those who govern and manage must strengthen – or acquire – governance capacities, but they often underestimate the importance of this area because they generally believe that with the help of experts they will be able to overcome this deficit. They are unaware that by failing to develop their capacities they will not only be unable to exercise them but also to require that they be enforced. Therefore, they organize training courses for their employees and teams but not for themselves. “There is too much to do!” “There is no time to waste!” The outcome of this will be a large amount of training with little real change. It is not unusual for employees in attendance at training sessions to ask their trainers, “wouldn’t it be a good idea if the person who hired you listened to what you say?” Or, “authorities do the exact opposite of what you are explaining to us.” Politicians think that experience is sufficient, that “their age, life experience, and grey hair” are all that they need to govern/manage, and that those three factors are more significant

than what they can learn at universities or with their graduates. Sometimes they are right, since preconceptions held by technocrats often originate in their university training, and they try to make the unpredictable into something predictable, preferring norms and calculations to the “game” described above. A scarce resource would be political leaders with knowledge + leadership capacity + experience. Conversely, it is common to find the formula knowledge + experience without leadership capacity, from which we obtain a consultant; or experience + leadership capacity without knowledge, yielding – as Matus states – a ringleader (7).

In this case what should be done? It is both possible and recommendable to work on governance capacities with those who govern/manage and their teams, and to initiate discussions on theories, methods, and techniques. Which ones? Several of them are discussed below, starting with the three elements that constitute the “iron triangle of the organizational game of management,” which are “the political leader’s agenda,” “systems of accountability,” and “management by operations” (10). This list – conceptualized by Matus and complemented by other authors – does not intend to be exhaustive or to provide formulas, but to provide models.

Political leaders’ agendas

Time and communication quickly become two of the biggest routine complications (h): time, a limited resource; and communication, a complex and often unpredictable action. This constant will become more powerful unless enough attention is paid to it. However, this generally does not occur. Why? Because of a tendency to believe that these resources do not influence the act of governing and that they can be administered. The fact that time is a rigid, limited, and irrevocable resource is often ignored. Similarly, communication is conceived of as a simple problem of transmission, following outdated paradigms that proposed a system involving a transmitter, a message, and a receiver (58). In general, theoretical discussions of language and communication are ignored, as is their importance regarding “action” and the “construction of social realities” (59-65).

The agenda of a political leader must allow for the administration of time and focus on the

political project. However, in general, the agenda seems to be organized by the opposition, with the urgent displacing the important and constant meetings without time for organization or processing. Political leaders hold meetings and answer phone calls taking away from already limited time, without understanding why it must be done, yet with a clear perception that many of these actions could have been solved in other areas. Nonetheless, leaders do not commonly go over their agendas with their teams. There is no time to save time! Everyone needs to see them, and their narcissism quickly becomes worrisome, but it is usually too late. They become trapped in this logic, besieged by corporate groups and well-established actors, far from those who initially raised their concerns and motivated them to run for office. The “outside” imposes the issues, meetings, events – they define the “playing field,” so to speak.

No time in the agenda is set aside to deal with strategic planning or training, resulting in a reduced capacity for making sure that the bureaucratic apparatus is able to serve the needs of the political project (7). There is no assessment of meetings, correspondences, e-mails, phone calls, cross-institutional coordination, or protocol activities. Things seem to be conceived of for days with endless time. The “daily menu of decisions,” product of the political leader’s agenda, is the result of improvisation rather than planning (7). There is no screening or previous processing of problems, just an indiscriminate use of time.

As they organize their work, political leaders cannot avoid establishing set agendas, which act as a filter for issues considered less important and that try to attract attention from more pressing matters. To achieve this, leaders must understand that in order to use time wisely, it is more important to control the quality of issues than the quantity, setting their agendas according to the type of problems as well as their hierarchy (7). Devoting time to problems that may be causing unrest without previous analysis is not the same as dealing with problems that have had prior technical or political processing. Problems causing unrest are difficult to understand and deal with because they are often superficially explained and confounding. In general, these problems have existed for some time and have become naturalized, and there is little awareness that they are the result of processes

of cultural adaptation to their negative effects and social resignation to their consequences (7,10).

The rationalization of the leader's agenda is a stimulus to the decentralization of problems not considered to be of high value to that agenda. The aim is the construction of a strategic agenda capable of managing the leader's time and maintaining focus on the priorities of the project, creating a system that reserves schedule blocks for dealing with strategic issues, placing routine tasks such as signing documents and holding meetings at fixed times.

Systems of appeal and accountability

There is widespread consensus regarding the low levels responsibility prevalent in public organizations, expressed by the fact that people do not exercise their right to appeal and that authorities are not held accountable for their actions. This situation exacerbates the minutiae of politics (conflicts, trivial honors or recognitions, the "games" of the environment) at the expense of politics "with a capital P," focused on people's problems. The absence of systems of appeal and accountability weakens any organization since they are essential to improving the quality of institutional relations and work processes (7,24). It should be noted that this is not a reference to the mechanism conceived by Frederick Taylor at the beginning of the 20th century, in which only bosses were held accountable for their actions. However, this idea is not to be confused with a system of rewards and punishments, but rather a multidimensional system in which everyone is held and holds others accountable regardless of their position, and related to individual, group, or institutional "work projects" constructed at all levels of the organization and discussed regularly in team meetings.

Management by operations

Political leaders/managers must ensure that problems with higher levels of priority are treated as such in order for them to receive the urgency and attention they require. These characteristics are lost when problems reach higher strata, where they are no longer approached as priorities and taken as mere formalities. If delegation is learned and made a central point of action, there will be greater agility in dealing with problems,

consequently saving time. This can allow for the leader to invest more time within the organization and the territory, taking part in conversations and improving communication.

Organizational charts are the traditional way of conceiving of how to make organizations work, along with mission statements and job descriptions (although these should be called "mere custom" based on their degree of compliance). Although these concepts are considered part of the prehistory of the theory of administration, this does not mean that they do not have loyal adherents or that they are no longer taught, as updated versions can be found in present-day management techniques. Russell Ackoff (1919-2009), a leading author on the management of systemic thought, accounted for their uselessness when he observed, "British workers have discovered a very effective way of making the organizations they work for not function properly: by working according to the rules" (41 p.121).

Management by operations is fundamental to the delegation of problem solving to other team members. The central idea is the creation of "ad-hocracies," or ad hoc organizational designs that cease to exist once the operation objectives are accomplished (66). Delegating responsibilities to people who generally do not have them or to people that do have them but lack decision-making authority is intended to make workers feel personally recognized with this designation while allowing them to experience the complexity of project leadership and to have the chance to be creative and break with routine. Management by operations is related to a system of accountability and petition to authorities; both must be present in order to improve governing skills.

The leader's office

Although it is uncommon to think about its design, this is where the decision-making process unfolds (7). However, its layout is often quite precarious. This observation is not solely related to the physical space, but rather it includes a wider concept encompassing all of the formal and informal spaces in which those who govern/manage and their teams deal with the decisions that are part of the act of governing/managing (24). Although it may seem to be a superfluous issue, just by witnessing/analyzing any work process it

becomes clear why it is necessary. In general, day-to-day life in a leader's office (LO) is consumed by papers that cannot be found and telephones that are constantly ringing, often leading to conversations that could have been handled by another department. The physical layout of furniture also works to undermine its quality, as it often follows aesthetic rather than functional criteria (proximity to the unnecessary and distance from the necessary, whether areas or people). Procedures are not helpful either: everything must be signed by high-ranking authorities, who often are unaware of what they are signing; but if they desire to check something or to review the document, alarms are set off that the administrative process has been halted, leading to serious problems. Therefore, leaders/managers must keep quiet and sign, or face the consequences. They must sign each document quickly in the spaces indicated by their secretary so as to not waste any time, given that there is a lot to be signed.

This disorderly situation may prompt leaders to announce things that are still being discussed thinking that they have already been decided on, to sign what should not have been signed, or to promise things that cannot be fulfilled or can never be achieved. If this seems familiar, then what is discussed here can be easily understood.

Leaders need to have three types of support available in their offices: technical, technical-political, and personal, including their closest confidants, family, and friends (7). It is also essential to establish "filters for quality" that give technical-political processing to problems before they appear on the leader's agenda; "filters for value" to assure that problems that are dealt with are pertinent to their situational space; and "filters for the admission of problems" to be conducive to effective time management (7). A good LO design will eliminate or reduce the impact of diverse situations that impede strategic use of time (10). The LO and the leader's agenda are intrinsically connected, and therefore it is necessary to consider them in conjunction.

Information systems for decision making

In order to illustrate the situation of political leaders with respect to their access to necessary information for decision-making processes, we can

make an analogy to the driver of a vehicle with its windshields painted black going very fast, who has no indication of even the most basic constraints of the situation, the surroundings, or the vehicle. The driver does not know where he is, at what speed he is driving, or how much gas he has; he has no idea of the temperature and the oil pressure, whether the road is a straight or winding, whether it is a gravel road or paved, or even if there is a wall ahead. Let alone GPS! The driver does however have two rear-view mirrors with which he can observe and keep track of everything he runs over while driving; he can see what he could not before, but it is too late!

It is impossible to drive blindly, with no data or information. Those who govern and manage need information to make decisions, and it has to be agile, easy to read, and user-friendly. It has to enable them to supervise and monitor different processes in order to be aware of the important issues, rather than superficial and unnecessary ones. For instance, statistical yearbooks may be of use to the leader's "situation room," but they may not be practical for leaders/managers, who need *ad hoc* dashboards for what they desire to monitor. Those will have few indicators, but they will be solid enough to carry out any discussion and to make warranted decisions.

Advancements in information and communications technologies (ICTs) are usually of great help given that they contribute to time saving and increased efficiency, provided that they are effectively incorporated into work and decision-making processes. However, they cannot resolve the issue *per se*, given the subjective dimensions of those who communicate or act as sources of data, or of those who process or utilize the data. Information systems, ICTs, monitoring and evaluation systems, and dashboards can be part of the problem or of the solution for the leader, depending on their availability, use, and quality (67-68).

Coefficient of transversality

Vertical or horizontal management, different forms of conceiving of management, are under constant debate and represent a synchronic form of thinking that ignores the dynamics of the scenarios and actors that leaders interact with every day. To remedy this situation, following Félix Guattari's conception, René Lourau postulated the

“coefficient of transversality” as a way of breaking with this vertical-horizontal antagonism, situations rarely encountered in reality in their pure form. This concept allows us to conceive of more or less vertical or more or less horizontal logics, products of the tensions of the game and of the context of a given situation at a given moment, following a clear diachronic conception (55).

Macro-organizational and organizational theory

Organizational theory was conceived of for the industrial world, and hence there was little room for a consideration of social organizations. Therefore, knowledge was largely structured as a metaphor of industry: machines, as symbols of rationality, emerge as the ultimate goal. In social organizations, these ideas exist alongside the sensation on the part of many workers that the daily routine is a result of spontaneity rather than rationality (69).

Those who govern enter into the game without prior knowledge of the playing field; or rather, they imagine it as a pyramid and assign themselves the role of pharaoh. But that is not the playing field. The organizational designs in which they will have to “play” are nothing like the pyramidal conceptions that they were socialized to envision. Organizational designs from the foundational moments of industry seem obsolete and the traditional tools of administrative hierarchies appear to be ineffective (70). Leaders constantly criticize bureaucracy, but when explaining their organizational ideals they recite almost by heart Weber’s description of an ideal bureaucracy (71 p.173-174). Macro-organizational theory (7) and the theory of professional bureaucracies (48) – just to mention a few of the organizational designs configured on the basis of a logic of games with multiple players – are generally ignored, and the time it takes to discover them can prove very costly.

Conflict resolution techniques

As many organizations have hundreds or even thousands of employees, infinite relational processes are established among them, their superiors, and users, there is great possibility for conflict, as highlighted previously. Whether they are conflicts of interest or cognitive conflicts, it is likely that they will be processed emotionally unless

techniques for conflict resolution are made available. Nonetheless, it is rare to find that employees have been trained on these techniques. The objective is not to suppress conflict, but to allow the members of an organization to freely decide in each case whether they will use war, persuasion, mediation, negotiation, imposition, or any other means they may consider to be appropriate. It is not desirable that workers always resort to war because it is the only conflict resolution technique that they know. It seems that Machiavelli’s indications are still being followed: “A prince must not have any other object nor any other thought... but war, its institutions, and its discipline; because that is the only art befitting one who commands” (20 p.80). In synthesis, if reality is relational and not substantial (43), negotiation skills are fundamental, which does not mean that everything must be negotiated.

The situation room

This is a place near the leader’s office (7,24), a space for technical-political processing in which the latest technology converges with well-trained and reliable professionals, who continuously design scenarios, maps of actors, viability analyses, problem analyses, balances of problem networks, and analyses of the belts of government (35), along with other techniques and methods conducive to decision-making processes. Their aim is to reduce improvisation – that is, to limit application of the “theorem of the oscillating fifth” (i). Specialized consultants are not to be confused with an office for technical-political processing. The former operate with logics specific to their disciplines, while the latter are structured for the analysis of problems. Carlos Matus’ conception of the situation room is far superior to the conceptual poverty of the Pan American Health Organization and the World Bank’s version of this concept for the healthcare field.

Budget for programs

Techniques for budgeting are traditionally applied as a powerful variable used to punish or reward. Its conceptual development is closer to household administration of money or to the old grocer’s notebook than to modern budgetary

techniques such as the technique of budget for programs (72) that proposes decentralizing budgeting to each production unit based on their own courses of action, and that define objectives, activities, timelines, outcomes, delegation of responsibilities, and indicators. In this sense, the intention is to eliminate the figure of the omnipotent administrator sitting on top of the budget and playing the “you never know what might happen” card in order to justify not spending money. In the budget for programs approach, actors that formulate plans must have the skills to decide the amount of money required for each action, which grants them the responsibility of being held accountable for their actions. It must also be recognized that this approach is often used as a slogan, while continuing with the old budgetary culture of following historical budgets and simply naming it budget for programs.

Communication

According to Bourdieu, the curse of the human sciences is that they deal with an object of study capable of speaking (42). Those who govern/manage generally ignore this difficulty, leading to serious communication problems both inside and outside of the organization. Political leaders are normative with respect to communication as well, and unaware of the complexity of language, apply it in a simplistic way such that aspects meant to be improved actually worsen. They also fail to acknowledge proposals that associate language with work and/or organization (61-63). Leaders consider language to be useful for giving orders, but they forget that this is impossible given that in the moment of action, it is freedom that will decide how the action unfolds, not the order (47). Far from this Sartrean conception of freedom, the leader seems to be a young Taylor, but a hundred years later.

The challenge faced by leaders is to establish communicational codes that condition anecdotes in order to problematize and conceptualize the situations that make up the daily life of the institution. If these communicational codes are established, a culture of high-quality conversation will be constructed, where “to say” becomes a synonym of “to do” (60-63). In this way, the organization can move towards the strengthening of a collective narrative (j) centered on the work of

the organization, allowing the group to become more operative and focused on the task at hand, rather than on conversations related to the complaints and discontent of the workers (74).

In turn, this narrative will strengthen the group spirit and the dominant logic will change from “acceptance” to “belief.” Translating this spirit into a narrative, and then transforming it into conversations, is necessary for the construction of a new institutional conception that assigns a central role to communication. Of course, this is much easier to write about than to accomplish.

Not dealing with the issue of communication may cause the leader to become confined in a small circle, which they become completely reliant on and that “tells” them about reality. It is well known that leaders largely assess problems and opportunities according to the weight of the channels of communication through which they access them. The risk is that this may establish a logic that prioritizes the messenger over the message, or that turns the messenger into a scapegoat: “the message is bad, kill the messenger.” This is far from what Confucius advised Zilu on how to serve a prince: “tell him the truth, even if it offends him” (75 p.128).

Policies for staff

When these policies are present, they seem to be designed by Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford, as they generally conceive of the worker as *homo economicus*, and therefore solely in terms of conflicts over wages. However, workers constitute the primary capital of the organization and their sense of belonging with respect to the institutional project is not just determined by what they are paid, but also in terms of identities, narratives, and spirit. This symbolic aspect is ignored, despite the fact that it is central to the process of identification with the organization and the political project, and that for many workers language is their primary tool. This leads political leaders and managers to think that the best option is to outsource, because “it is impossible to make these people work.” Outsourcing appears as the answer to the difficulties in building the idea of an “us,” not as a prior substantial identity, but as a space that can be entered into and built (76).

Work projects

The work or tasks at hand are not always the main source of reflection for the team. However, they will not be able to act if they remain focused on their complaints and discontent. Meetings to reflect on work are useless in the viewpoint of the traditional administrator because workers are seen as manual laborers, and communication is limited to writing down instructions, giving way to the trite phrase "write it down and then give it to me," a clear legacy of Taylorism. The time workers spend having conversations about their work will be an investment that enables them to reflect on its symbolic dimensions (representations, narratives, and spirit), central aspects to the creation of a team identity.

Nomadism

Those who govern and manage must see themselves as nomads in order to be able to directly intervene in the network of conversations that make up their organization without intermediaries. If the leader remains sedentary they may become surrounded by yea-sayers and "Yrigoyen's newspapers" (k). It is very important that leaders have direct access to reality in order to avoid becoming trapped in a system of communication consisting of a few people offering their versions of reality. By moving around within the organization, leaders make their presence felt, hold meetings (spontaneous or scheduled), while also creating the possibility of managing time and deciding when to leave that meeting, whether it be in a hallway or in someone else's office. This nomadism cannot be limited to the organization, but must be extended to the territory where the people who benefit from and demand its action are, establishing direct contact with them without intermediaries or messengers. This will enable leaders to experience first-hand how their actions are perceived and what new demands and/or problems have arisen. It is for this reason that this article proposes an "all-terrain" and "amphibious" model (77) for those who govern and manage, given that their capacities must reach all levels of the organization and the territory. They cannot govern from the desk alone; it is necessary to abandon pyramidal models that construct managers and

workers in diverse socialization processes that they have gone through at various stages of life (family, school, church, army, and so on) and opt for rhizomatic constructions (l) (79) if they expect the project to survive beyond the present moment.

Cabinet meetings

As is the case of commission or committee meetings, these meetings are usually unpopular within institutions. Why do they generate such little support? Because they are disorganized, unproductive, and repetitive. In general they do not follow a strict schedule with start and end times and participants continuously come and go. This dynamic is worsened by the constant interruptions of cell phones that never stop ringing. Participants' behaviors are generally predictable (it is known what each person present is going to say in each situation) and many times the meeting functions as a moment of catharsis rather than a creative space. There is usually no agenda, or if there is it is not known in advance, no one keeps a record of what is said or the commitments made, there are no coordinators, and if there is it is always the same person. There is no democratic procedure for assigning speaking time to each participant; there is neither a set amount of time allotted to each person nor is there a list of speakers. Anecdote after anecdote is told and they are repeated without any conceptualization. It is rare that the issues discussed are of interest to everyone, which facilitates isolated or overlapping dialogues, and there is no self-assessment. The same ritual can repeat itself for years and it seems impossible to change. What should be done then? Set start and end times, and needless to say, respect them; define the agenda and circulate it in advance; deal only with relevant and multilateral issues (affecting all the participants), and leave any other issue that is not multilateral to be discussed in another meeting held by those interested. Thus, the disconnection felt by some participants due to lack of interest or ignorance regarding an issue may be avoided. This includes rotating coordination of meetings; each successive meeting will begin with a review of the previous meeting's minutes and an assessment of the accountability of those who have made commitments. Although cabinet meetings follow a logic of group culture more than management

techniques, they could be improved through the application of the measures mentioned above.

The three belts of government

Matus writes of three belts (or balances) that must be monitored and should not be adjusted simultaneously (35). The political management belt synthesizes positive and negative results achieved in specific contexts and responds to political demands of social actors and the general population, with power as the critical resource. The macroeconomic belt registers political consequences and economic results of macroeconomic management, where economic means constitute scarce and critical resources. The belt resulting from the interaction of specific problems is the result of political effects of the struggles over those problems, where the scarce and critical resources are economic capital, political power, and especially governance capacities. The two central criteria for analyzing these belts are technical efficacy and political efficacy (35). If monitoring the three belts provides positive results, it will be an incentive to political leaders; but if it is negative, they will be forced to establish new strategies and actions in the short term.

Team building

In the process of governing, political leaders will be subject to tensions that limit their lifestyles. The lack of a team, which leaders tend to think they can replace with a combination of experts from different disciplines, will quickly reveal their miscalculation. If the leader finds that they are governing/managing alone, it is because they have been unable to build a team. Each organization's particular characteristics will define the number of members to include in a team and their professional profiles. Nonetheless, it is recommendable to build heterogeneous teams with a diversity of viewpoints, in order to be better prepared for the multiple situations that they will have to deal with while ensuring the continuity of project over time via younger members. It will be necessary to fill different positions, to have players with different characteristics aware of the fact that there will be moves where certain players will have a more prominent role than others, meaning that narcissistic attitudes will have to be sacrificed for the

common good. As is the case for any relational or group process, the possibility of conflict exists. Thus it is convenient to recall Sartre: "...groups are made for doing and are undone while doing" (33 p.502). Team building can take many years and its results become clear when players begin to "play by heart" and speech is not necessary for an action, but a look will suffice. Furthermore, there are no recipes; although team sports might provide some clues to effective team building, teams must not be mistaken for groups of friends or relatives.

Other methods and techniques can be combined with those previously mentioned. They may include: problem analysis, strategic analysis, scenarios, maps of actors, simulations, public administration evaluation and monitoring, and game techniques (38); all should be put to the service of "the political" via politics and governance capacities. Although the autonomy of the theories, methods, and techniques of governance may imply falling into technocratic proposals, it is not the intention of this article to favor that logic. Nonetheless, their use is likely to be conditioned by the interests of actors/agents, which may account for differences in their application, which may be explained by both conflicts of interest as well as cognitive conflict.

INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE CAPACITIES

What are the components of institutional governance capacities? The capital that the organization provides to the leader: institutional capacities, staff training and motivation, the financial situation of the organization, building conditions, and cultural values (organizational spirit, narrative, and quality of conversations), to name but a few of the most important aspects.

The region's democratic advancements of recent decades have not always meant new institutional arrangements. The sensation that is impossible to change bureaucratic apparatuses is widespread among those with management experience. As Oscar Oszlak observes, "the State bureaucracy, administrative widow of successive governments and political regimes, ends up becoming a huge cemetery of political projects" (80).

As is the case for the strengthening of governance capacities, the idea of “governance schools” (10) may be useful for institutional capacities, which require new institutional arrangements, impossible without large-scale State reform. In this respect, the proposal outlined here differs from second generation reform proposals introduced by international organizations that subscribe to Washington Consensus guidelines (17), meant to establish an “inevitable sequence, according to which the logic of state reform processes must fit with a linear and predetermined course” (19 p.1), or by authors that frame their proposals within that logic, intending to hide their political objectives (82) behind a number of management instruments and processes that correspond to a technocratic vision of reform (18,81).

Oscar Oszlak states that the history of the 20th century demonstrated countless attempts at State reform, most of them known as administrative reforms, which were related to different moments and development strategies, and where each reform assigned a particular role to the State and governments (19). It cannot be said that these experiences have been able to construct institutional capacities, therefore raising the question as to why State reform in Latin America has systematically failed.

The problem of the State is not exclusively related to its size, but also has to do with its conceptualization. The perspective laid out in this article favors a formulation of “State reform” that breaks with proposals advocating for a small and efficient State. Discussions of State reform require the participation of workers as well as the social groups that interact with its institutions. Reforms conceived from an external logic (7), that is to say, laws that permeate institutions and define the normative contents of the reform, are doomed to fail regardless of who carries them out (7,84). This can be exemplified by the processes of State reform in Latin America that have been carried out in recent decades, which have generally obtained poor results or no results at all.

Reform must be explored from an internal logic (7,84), allowing citizens and workers to deliberate and discuss the social significance of those organizations and those jobs; in other words, the “why” and the “what for” of the institution. This can trigger processes of change and resignification (7), but in order to do so it

is necessary to penetrate the mental processes of those workers and their relationship to their work in order to envision another organizational culture. It will be necessary to create a new critical mass that enables the organization to provide for the real needs of the population and to be under their control. This proposal is based on an acknowledgment of the way in which mental structures and organizational culture have decisive influence on work practices and organizational formats; this explains why modifications of organizational charts do not necessarily produce changes in the organization (10). In synthesis, internal reform should be carried out together with the people and workers from each institution, while external reform generally ends up being against the workers, as it does not consider them agents of change.

Mario Testa highlights how dominant groups use their power to create organizational formats, while dominated groups only have the power of the organizations they are able to create, which is why they do not have any other resource but the awareness of their problems along with the (temporary) political power they derive from them (50).

New institutional arrangements must be created that go beyond buildings and organizational charts structured by a pyramidal logic. Territory-based mechanisms that produce direct and personalized ties between workers and users should be designed. Will we be able to readily accept these institutions, to believe in them, and identify with them?

FINAL THOUGHTS

This article has primarily taken up the work of the “later” Matus, which deals with institutional and personal governance capacities. The reader might wonder whether his experience originating in the so-called “implementation of socialism by democratic means” is too far removed and if the historical events that have altered the world in recent decades have made it even more far removed and thus perhaps outdated his work. While this question would be logical, the intention of this article is not to use Matus’ work to answer it, nor is it to use the tales of “Pepe” Mujica (27), Luis Ignacio

Lula Da Silva (26), or Dilma Rouseff (29). Rather, in order to provide an answer, it will be beneficial to refer to the figure of Álvaro García Linera, current vice-president of Bolivia (85,86).

In his opening presentation at the 6th Philosophy Forum of Venezuela, Álvaro García Linera, university professor with a long history of activism, highlighted that once an individual takes control of the government, tasks appear that are not addressed by training in classical Marxist works. Similarly, while reflecting on the complexity of governing and what he calls the creative tensions that arise, at one point in the presentation he addressed Enrique Dussel – Argentine philosopher exiled in Mexico and his former professor – and said, “I could never see it when I was a professor, comrade Dussel, but as I am now in government I realize that sometimes it cannot be seen from the outside” (86). Then, resuming his discussion of how to face those dilemmas and build hegemony (as intellectual and moral leadership) he stated, “there is no way out, there is no answer – I cannot find it, professor – I cannot find it, and again I think that the key is to ride out those contradictions” (86). What did he mean with these statements? He was referring to the complexity of governing, that tensions are to be “solved” creatively and that limit the “should be” logic.

His reflections on the tensions that are confronted in any government is that there is no “way out,” there are no answers *a priori*, but they have to be experienced and one must learn how to move in the delicate balance between contradictory extremes, aware of the complexities and the need for permanent action, something not always understood by those who observe from the outside:

This is not understood by some repentant intellectuals who replace reality with conceptual digressions, who have never been immersed in the heat of the real battles of the population and who now, in the light of the recent and inevitable difficulties of these new

phases, abandon the ship they have joined, following the trend to return to the middle class, from which they never really left. (85 p.48) [Own translation]

“The political” has a particular essence and several expressions such as activism, territory, ideology, the charisma of political leaders, values, culture, history, and so on. In this article the focus has been a reflection on those expressions and on governance capacities, demonstrating the conviction that it is possible to combine science with ideology in order to govern. Similarly, it is possible to join wills, convictions, and technical-political capacities so that government and management cooperate to make the political project viable rather than becoming an obstacle. To achieve this, it is necessary to build a theory for the practice of governing/managing, a construction that has to start with the practice itself so as to not fall into technocratic proposals characteristic of an instrumentalist rationality. That construction should acknowledge that governing requires creative actions that use theory as a toolbox (87) and risks whose successful realization depends on a commitment to them. Such a construction would create tension between the logic characteristic of disciplinary knowledge centered on depth (knowing more about fewer things) and the logic distinctive of what is proposed here – a logic constructed transversally (knowing less about many things), one that is largely relegated at universities.

In situations of government, as an ideology, “the political” must be operationalized in policies, and these require – among other things – governance theories, methods, and techniques capable of becoming actions, in a complex game full of uncertainties and surprises. In spite of this, those actions should be related to “the political” so that they can constitute a virtuous cycle. Not accounting for the relevance of personal and institutional governance capacities would mean running the risk of weakening the achievements gained in recent decades in the majority of Latin American countries.

ENDNOTES

- a. On governing: "to govern is to interfere in the development of the game with the calculated intention of achieving a goal" (10 p.406). On managing: "the art of thinking, deciding, and acting. It is the art of doing and making things happen, of obtaining results. Results that could be defined, anticipated, analyzed, and assessed, but that must be achieved by people in constant human interaction" (11 p. 25).
- b. Here, governing does not exclusively refer to the maximum authority of a country, since whether or not this is a fitting designation, it usually does suit a large part of the political leader's teams, who are the ones that will carry out policies, instructions, or respond to the leader's or the people's requests. In short, we do not speak of a single person, but in a clear republican sense, that is, of representative powers and institutions that have the responsibility to govern/manage be they president, minister, secretary, governor, mayor, and so on.
- c. A limitation of the Spanish language is that word for "policy" is not differentiated from the word for "politics," which refers to the art and science of governing [both English words in Spanish are translated as "*política*."]
- d. Second generation reforms are those that were developed within the framework of the Washington Consensus and that proposed privatization, decentralization, outsourcing, and labor market reforms as its main actions. In contrast to other past reforms in Latin America, these do not suggest introducing changes but removing responsibilities from the State. They have their basis in documents such as *Beyond the Washington Consensus: Institutions Matter* (17) and *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector* (18). Criticisms can be found, for example, in "Better Government: The Challenge of Second and Third Generations of State Reform" (19).
- e. These three Spanish terms are commonly found in political jargon and refer to actions that lack transparency. *Rosca/rosquear* refers to negotiations that are conducted based on relationships whose aim is the exchange of favors and/or to obtain certain positions. *Verso/versear* is the delivery of "politically correct" statements for a situation despite the fact that the person who utters them does not necessarily consider them to be true or does not intend to execute and achieve the actions they imply. *Poroteo/porotear* alludes to an exchange of posts, positions, or objects as part of secret transactions to gain support for the project.
- f. In Greek mythology, Sisyphus angered the gods with his extraordinary shrewdness, and as punishment he was condemned to go blind and perpetually roll a boulder to the top of a mountain, only for the boulder to roll back down again every time he reached the summit. He was therefore obligated to repeat this action eternally.
- g. In this article these concepts will be used interchangeably, although some authors insist on using the term "agents" instead of "actors" (42) and vice versa (24).
- h. When I read this in Carlos Matus' work, I could not help but remember my mother, a homemaker who only attended primary school, saying repeatedly, "I need a 48-hour day," and "what language am I speaking?" showing that communication problems are not exclusive to management or government but rather are captured in the realm of common sense before that of science.
- i. Technique for decision making that consists of stretching out an arm perpendicular to the body, separating the fingers and rotating the hand repeatedly 90 degrees on its axis to assert pensatively: "well... more or less..."
- j. The concept of narrative will be used to refer to forms of describing reality that mediate between the internal world of thought and feelings and the external world of observable actions which result in the consolidation, variation, or transformation of the sense and significance of a series of facts internal to an organization on the part of different groups or workers that are part of it.
- k. During the second term of ex-president of Argentina Hipólito Yrigoyen (1928-1930), a fictional newspaper – of which only one copy was printed – was created so that the president could read "good news" written by his advisers. Obviously, the information it contained was not real.
- l. We take the definition of rhizome from the book *Cartographies of Desire*: "aborescent diagrams passing through successive hierarchies, from a central point, where each local element returns to its point of origin. In contrast, rhizomatic systems can be endless, establishing transversal connections without the need to center or close them. The term rhizome has been borrowed from botany, where it defines a system of underground stems of vivacious plants that emit adventitious buds and roots in their lower parts (example: iris rhizome)" (78 p.207-208) [Own translation].

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