Responsabilidade cívica e governação moderna

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“The state is by definition the instrument whereby human society collectively organizes and expresses itself. A sovereign society that fears the state is a moribund society, unconvinced of the usefulness of its own existence.”

In this discussion I would like to argue that the greatest unaddressed problem in modern governance is the lack of civic responsibility. A corollary question to this is what public administrators can do to encourage responsible civic participation in public affairs.

My interest in this topic has been spurred in part by life in a country that is currently experiencing a level of irrational anti-government civic irresponsibility that has long been truly impressive.¹ I hesitate to say the most irresponsible in the world, as such parochial chutzpa is far too common among we ‘estadounidenses’.² So while perhaps not necessarily the world’s worst example of civic irresponsibility, to the extent that it prevents American society from addressing real problems, it is especially notable in that it may contribute to the decline of a society that, by any objective assessment, has led to one of the most successful societies in human history.

Recent political events have further reinforced my conviction regarding the importance of civic responsibility. This has been especially evident in France and in the United States. In the former, a series of strikes have been protesting attempts by the French government to reduce (among other things) retirement costs. Despite an aging population³ and sluggish economic growth⁴, many French are reluctant to accept that the retirement age might need to be raised from 60 to 62

¹ As an example, this push to reduce the size of the state in the United States comes despite the libertarian, pro-market, anti-government Cato and Fraser Institutes’ annual Economic Freedom of the World Report showing that through 2008, the United States had one of the least regulatory governments in the world, and one of the smallest governments in the rich world. The Cato/Fraser data also report that overall economic freedom has been rising steadily in the United States: the Clinton era continued the trend of smaller, less intrusive government of the Reagan era, and while economic freedom declined a bit during the GW Bush era, the US remains one of the least regulated societies in the world.
² As a post-election commentary in the Toronto Globe & Mail (Yakabuski 2010) put it: “[Florida Governor-elect Marco Rubio] speaks endlessly of the United States as ‘simply the single greatest nation in all of human history,’ a phrase that endears him to disciples of American exceptionalism, a sacred doctrine among U.S. conservatives.”
³ World Health Organization data indicates that the percentage of population over the age of 60 is 22% for France, 18% for the United States, and 10% for Brazil. See WHO’s Global Health Observatory: http://www.who.int/gho/en/
⁴ The World Bank’s World Development Report 2010 shows French annual GDP growth of 1.7% from 2000-8, less than that both of the United States (2.5%) and Brazil (3.6%). See http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2010/Resources/5287678-1226014527953/Statistical-Annex.pdf
years. Meanwhile, recent mid-term elections in the United States (a slightly richer country\textsuperscript{5} with a considerably younger population and a retirement age approaching 67 years) have seen mid-term elections\textsuperscript{6} in which voters have rejected the party that has been struggling with the aftermath of the worst economic recession in 80 years, and replaced it with the party whose deregulatory policies,\textsuperscript{7} and control of the US government for most of the past 30 years\textsuperscript{8}, caused the recession. Complaints about the size of government have dominated this discourse.\textsuperscript{9} As a ‘public administrationist’ who has spent most of his career in political science departments, I have noticed an at times yawning chasm between the two disciplines in terms of elections (largely the realm of political science) and governing (more the realm of public administration). While one can win elections giving the people what they want, however unreasonable; one cannot govern that way, as financial balance sheets and economic forces, even foreign militant groups, are immune to populist rhetoric.\textsuperscript{10}

A more important line of thinking that has lead me to conclude that civic responsibility is important comes out of a series of research papers (and hopefully future book) that I have been working on. I have presented the ideas of the book in previous trips to Florianopolis and, as it is only tangentially related to the topic of this discussion, will not discuss it at length. But to summarize this greatly, as a North American ‘public administrationist’ who has researched and especially taught broadly in the field (teaching especially because I have spent my entire career in small Masters of Public Administration programs, in which breadth has been necessary), I have been interested in identifying and so being able to convey to students a comprehensive understanding of the field. This is especially important because public administration has often been considered an amorphous, interdisciplinary and so incoherent field (Gow 2010, p. 31); while at best public administration is seen as an amorphous, interdisciplinary, incoherent but, as Iain Gow has put it: “est une science empirique par excellence” (1993, p. 87). My good friend Curt Ventriss put this tension between interdisciplinarity and intellectual coherence as well as anyone:

\textsuperscript{5} WDR 2010 data, again, shows French GDP per capita at purchasing power parity of $34,400, compared to $46,970 for the United States.

\textsuperscript{6} This election saw ballots cast by about 34.6\% of the voting age population.

\textsuperscript{7} By any reasonable assessment. See Roubini and Mihm 2010, Ahamed 2009, Cassidy 2009, Volcker 2008, Bernanke 2009, and especially Alan Greenspan’s 23 October 2008 testimony to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. Beyond this short term cause of the recession, Republican policies are also likely to retard long term growth, as an anti-tax, anti-state, almost anarcho-libertarian ideology threatens long term investment in education, infrastructure and the like, and as another plunge into recession is risked by continued inadequate regulation of financial markets.

\textsuperscript{8} Republicans have held the White House for 20 of the 28 years prior to the economic collapse of 2008. Republicans have controlled the Senate for 11 of the 14 years up to 2009. Republicans controlled the House for 12 of the 14 years prior to 2009. Seven of nine Supreme Court Justices had been appointed by Republicans.

\textsuperscript{9} As an example, prominent conservative commentator George Will’s nationally syndicated, Sunday 7 November 2010 column claimed: “This election was a nationwide recoil against the president’s idea of unlimited government.” See first footnote 1, above, with its evidence of small government in the U.S. as of 2008. Since then, the Heritage Foundation, an ultra-conservative partisan thinktank, released its new 2010 Index of Economic Freedom. Rather than ‘unlimited government’, this ranks the United States the eighth most free economy in the world.

\textsuperscript{10} These past two paragraphs are not meant to sound as pro-Democrat, and anti-Republican as they otherwise might. To use a French source, given l’ENA connection of this event: Bernard-Henri Lévy (2008) provided an excellent critique of ideological excesses of the European left that may match those of the North American right. Given the footnotes 1, 7, 8 and 9 above, though, it has hard to make the case that the United States of (north) America is suffering from an excess of leftist ideological domination.
It is true that public affairs education is too important to be left to those who are exclusively trained in public administration or public policy; conversely, it is also too important to be left to an amalgamation of scholars whose knowledge of public administration is rudimentary at best. Expressing an interest in the public sector is simply not enough to provide proper educational glue. A public affairs program is not an intellectual reservation for those who want to teach -- regardless of their intellectual perspective -- something about the public sector independent of any knowledge (or interest) in the field as a whole... Without a substantive connection to the normative content of the field, an interdisciplinary approach is degraded into a state of babel, confusion, and bewilderment. (1991, p. 9)

Worse, too often attempts at a comprehensive understanding of the field of public administration tend to feature searches for the single dominant paradigm or, in contemporary parlance: the ‘killer app’. Though it was essentially a history of the ‘killer apps’ in American public administration over the past century, Nicholas Henry’s otherwise excellent, 1975 article in *Public Administration Review* started my thinking on this topic. My first contribution to this literature came in a 2008 article in the *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, which was limited to tracking some readily identifiable paradigms in the American, Australian, Brazilian and Canadian academic public administration literatures. This paper made no attempt to track all such paradigms, as a taxonomy of public administration paradigms seemed incomprehensible at the time.

Providing such an over-riding framework is precisely what I am currently trying to do, drawing especially on my reading of a number of national literatures, in (broadly) decreasing intensity: the US, Brazil, Canada, Australia, France, Portugal, Philippines, India and the United Kingdom. After reading Henry’s discussion of paradigms, as well as other North American treatments of the topic, it quickly became clear to me that these North American, even broader Anglo-phone discussions, were incomprehensible (reinventing and renaming old paradigms) and especially parochial, 11 ignoring perspectives on governance that were common elsewhere.

These ruminations led me first to identify a broad, ‘Pre-modern’ paradigm of public administration both to reinforce the revolutionary nature of the ‘Bureaucratic’ paradigm, as well as to provide a way to discuss societies which lacked this bureaucratic revolution of effective, efficient, and responsive government. From this the Bureaucratic paradigm (of Max Weber, Henri Fayol, Woodrow Wilson, DASP, and l’ENA!), with its hierarchy, rules, and emphasis on technical competence, is rescued from the barbs of contemporary critics. 12 If the Bureaucratic paradigm focuses on *how* to govern, a second issue of major importance in modern governance has to be *why* one governs. Normative questions of these sorts I identify as a second major paradigm of modern public administration. 13

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13 Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1981), Curtis Ventriss (1989), and Maurício Serva (1997) are three good exemplars of this approach.
Having identified the how and why of the agency ‘box’, my third paradigm of modern public administration is what I term Networked approaches. The modern governance literature, along with network theory, systems theory, and a number of others, fall in to this category. The emphasis here is on the relationships the agency has with, and the obligations the agency has to, the rest of society.¹⁴ From this a sort of symmetrical logic suggested that equally important is the relationships citizens have with, and obligations citizens have to, public agencies: civic responsibility.

In especially two recent works, Georgette Dumont and I have discussed civic responsibility at a broad, theoretical level, first largely in the North American (Candler & Dumont 2010) and second largely in a Brazilian (Candler and Dumont forthcoming) context. Civic responsibility, at a conceptual level, might be seen as the inverse of individualistic self interest. This is not to deny the ability of Adam Smith’s famous ‘invisible hand’ to yield socially beneficial outcomes. However, as I have argued in another recently published paper, a first, fundamental flaw of the narrow advocates of individualism as guiding principle for society is that even Smith identified limits to markets as producers of the ‘bem público’ (Candler 2010, pp. 340-3). A strong stream of the economics profession, though, has taken Smith’s invisible hand metaphor well beyond Smith’s original meaning. Von Mises especially sought to “convert the theory of market prices into a general theory of human choice” (Mises 1949, p. 3). Central to this was methodological individualism (pp. 41-4) with its assumption that “human action is necessarily always rational” (p. 18) to the individual actor, and so government intervention was less likely to lead to outcomes that benefit the public than would the aggregated private decisions of citizens themselves (Hayek, 1944, pp. 75-9). This takes the benefits of economic individualism far from Smith’s original justification of his invisible hand as leading to the interest of society (Smith 1776, p. 478).

This individualism is, it is widely recognized, especially prominent in the United States. Dumont and I trace the development of American individualism, its apogee in the 1920s, decline after the Great Depression and through to the 1970s, then resurgence to the current day.¹⁵

The pathology of individualism

Dumont and I have argued that the problem with individualism has been that many societies have developed an imbalance between individual initiative and collective responsibility. We refer to this as ‘the pathology of individualism’, with the United States as the paradigmatic example. Again, this is not to argue that individual initiative is not important. Indeed, Israel’s oldest kibbutz recently announced plans to “shed their socialist, utopian aspirations in favor of a new market system that empowers the individual” (Murphy 2007, p. 11). Rather, Dumont and I have argued that responsibility to the collectivity has been under-emphasized. What is needed is

¹⁴ Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, again, identified these issues in his Theory of Social Systems Delimitation (1981, pp. 121-34), and Jacques Chevallier discusses governance (2003), a current term for this phenomenon. Tânia Fischer (1997) wrote an early Brazilian article applying network theory.

¹⁵ Ana Paula Paes de Paula (2007, pp. 27-71) provides an excellent Brazilian discussion of the development of economic liberalism, and see also Candler 2010.
a rebalancing along the lines of Mary Parker Follett’s ‘new individualism,’ conscious of its social context (1919, pp. 73-4).

By way of context, Table 1 presents three indicators of individualism: Geert Hofstede’s influential Individualism and Masculinity measures, an economic freedom indicator from the Fraser/Cato Institutes’ annual *Economic Freedom of the World Report*, and an inequality indicator from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Hofstede’s Masculinity measure reflects the (individualistic) elements of assertiveness and competitiveness. Economic freedom equates with economic individualism, while inequality suggests a lack of collective empathy within society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Hofstede Individualism</th>
<th>Hofstede Masculinity</th>
<th>Economic Freedom</th>
<th>Inequality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>USA</strong></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.56</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brazil</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>20&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>46&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>20&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>46&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
<sup>1</sup> – Hofstede 2009.
<sup>2</sup> – Cato 2009.
<sup>3</sup> – Ratio of the incomes of the richest 10% of citizens to the poorest 10%. Source: UNDP 2009.
<sup>4</sup> – The data is for West Africa.

On many reasonable measures of individualism and/or civic irresponsibility, Brazil shares with the United States the status as one of the most individualistic countries on earth. While Brazil scores relatively low on individualism and economic freedom, it scores a bit higher on the ‘Masculinity’ measure. The last column, though, presents a different perspective: despite dramatic recent improvement, inequality in Brazil has been among the highest in the world. Many argue that a number of elements of the early political culture of the country – the
settlement of the country by a neo-feudal Portugal, the private (rather than statist) initiative of the early settlements, the legacy of slavery – made the country non conducive to a broadly defined collective citizenship (Freyre 1978; Leal 1948; Prado 1928; Sodre 1944).

**Citizenship**

Especially in the Brazilian context, civic responsibility might best be understood through reference to discussions of citizenship. My dictionary defines *cívico* as “relativo aos cidadãos como membros do Estado.” *Responsabilidade cívica*, then, refers to the responsibilities, duties (*deveres*), and obligations that citizens have as a result of their membership of society. Explicit in this is a sense of collective identity, rather than a conception of society as composed of individuals who at best observe some basic rules in their respective pursuit of self-interest.

Citizenship may be taken for granted in mature democracies, while other societies struggle to expand it. By way of context, Table 2 below presents citizenship indicators, based on the oft-cited definition of citizenship as including the three key dimensions of civil, political and social rights (Vieira, 2001, p. 33; Bresser Pereira, 1997, pp. 289-90; Lavalle, 2003, pp. 76-80).

**Table 2 – Dimensions of citizenship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Civil liberties&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Political rights&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>HDI&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>HDI rank – GDI rank&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.970</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.966</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.961</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.960</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>USA</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.951</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.909</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.854</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.844</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.817</td>
<td>-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brazil</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.612</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.526</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>-19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
<sup>1</sup> – Freedom House, 2009. The Freedom House scores range from 1 (free) to 7 (not free).
<sup>2</sup> – Human Development Index. Source: UNDP, 2009.
<sup>3</sup> – Human Development Index rank minus Gross Domestic Product per capita, and purchasing power parity. Source: UNDP 2009.
The first two columns in the table come from Freedom House’s annual *Freedom in the World* report and range from 1 to 7, with lower scores indicating more able to exercise these civil and political rights of citizenship. The two right hand columns use the UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI) – which includes indicators of wealth, health and education -- to capture the existence of social rights, or at least the concrete realization of those rights. The last column, especially, helps correct for differences in income. The column subtracts a country’s HDI rank from its international rank in terms of GDP per capita, so rich countries in which this wealth fails to be reflected in ‘human development’ produce negative scores; while poorer countries that achieve higher human development scores get positive scores.

As shown in Table 2, Brazil scores a bit worse than perfect scores for civil and political rights, though is still rated as ‘free’ by Freedom House. The country has moved steadily toward the realization of these fundamental elements of citizenship, having been rated poorly (on the lower end of the ‘partly free’ category) from the advent of Freedom House’s data in 1973 through the mid-1980s, when these scores steadily rose on redemocratization. In terms of social rights of citizenship, at least as reflected in the gap between income and human development, Brazil outperforms the United States, but is outperformed by the other Latin American countries in the table. Still, given economic limitations, Brazil has more recently done fairly well in terms of the human development of its citizens.

Beyond this, though, Sachs (1998) echoes Amartya Sen (1999 and 2009) in emphasizing the importance of *positive* freedoms in citizenship. Similarly, Carvalho implies that rights of citizenship go beyond legal enshrinement, these rights also need to be implemented. In the absence of a robust justice system, too many Brazilians suffer from “direitos civis retardatários” (2002, pp. 209-17). Similarly, Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira (1997) and allies argue for direitos republicanos: “os direitos que cada cidadão tem de que os bens públicos – os bens que são de todos e para todos – permaneçam públicos, não sejam capturados por indivíduos ou grupos de interesse” (p. 300).

What has been missing in discussions of citizenship, though, is responsible citizenship. The rights of citizens increasingly having improved, the duties of citizens can now be emphasized. In a discussion structured around Heidegger’s notion of dasein, Fraga and Schultz (2009) do address responsibility, duties, and the obligation to be a “reflexive e eticamente ativo” (p. 77) citizen. In Brazil, this lack of emphasis on the responsibilities of citizenship might, perhaps, have been understandable. Given an existing state that historically failed to extend civil, political and social rights of citizenship to Brazilians, it would have been hard to convince many Brazilians that they had obligations to the state, and so the emphasis on attaining these rights seems reasonable. Still, the lack of a stronger sense of collective identity has been identified by many as a fundamental problem in the country. In short, Brazil suffers from too much individualism and too little communitarianism.

What to do?

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16 This is supported by Cato/Fraser data, that rates Brazil 84th in terms of judicial/legal effectiveness; and by Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, which rates Brazil 75th.
A common solution offered for the ills of modern society is public participation, both at the organizational (see Faria, 2009) and society-wide level (Paula, 2005). The Denhardts, for instance, task public managers with “building relationships of trust and collaboration with and among citizens” (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003, p. 42), “the creation of shared interests and shared responsibility” (p. 42), “helping citizens articulate and meet their shared interests” (p. 43), and operating “processes of collaboration and shared leadership based on respect for all people” (p. 43). Yet this is asking too much of public managers if citizens do not themselves have an obligation to participate responsibly.

Juan Mozzicafreddo also notes the impact of “particularismo institucional” on participation, as “o jogo de pressões e as relações clientelares” (2001a, p. 16) result in less influence for those less adept at ‘the game’, and those without strong patrons. Central to the problem is differential access and so differential influence in the policy process (Mozzicafreddo 2003, p. 8-9; Etzioni, 1993, p. 213-25; Bok 2001, pp. 81-94). Derek Bok notes the occasional failure of political leaders to inspire citizens (2001, p. 95), but he identifies the public as “among the most important forces, if not the most important” (p. 351) source of weakness in government. On the one hand the public has unrealistic expectations (p. 366-70; Antunes, 2002, p. 136), on the other too many citizens fail to participate in politics or policy (Bok, 2001, p. 385-98). In short, Bok blames citizen apathy and disengagement, concluding “people get the quality of government they deserve” (p. 419).

A second problem with participation as a solution to the contemporary malaise is that just as the political process and its representative democracy can be inegalitarian, so can the policy process and its participatory democracy. As Schattschneider famously put it, “the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with an upper class accent” (1960, p. 35). Socio-economic status is an especially strong predictor of civic engagement in Brazil (Young, 2006; Lavalle, 2003; Vidal, 2003; Carvalho, 2002, pp. 228-9). Even nonprofit advocacy groups are no panacea, as they, too, suffer the risk of elite cooptation (Fernandes, 1994; Ramos, 1994; Silva and d’Arc, 1996).

To apply the old saying: public administrators may be able to lead the civic horse to the waters of responsible participation, but the horse must drink the waters of its own volition. Too often this responsible citizenship is lacking. In such cases the public administrator has few options, and Dumont and I argue that graduate professional programs in public administration provide the administrator with few tools for dealing with such dilemmas. Bill McGregor put the issue nicely, as “the democratic scheme requires that [public service] careerists cheerfully place themselves at risk by educating and sustaining an often querulous public” (1984, p. 126). In other words, what options does the ethical administrator have when faced with a public that is variously self-interested, obstreperous, uncivil, ill-informed and/or apathetic and disengaged?

Given the limitations of participation; education is also an oft-cited solution to this problem. Derek Bok calls for education for citizenship (2001, p. 403-10), as does Etzioni (1993, p. 89-112). A number of Brazilian observers have similarly suggested that civic education is the only variable likely to change negative citizen perceptions of the state (Cabral, 2003, pp. 40-1; Pereira, 1997, p. 292). These proposals suggest that the current emphasis in education on technical skills (reading, math, science) at the expense of civic education may create people able to get jobs, but these jobs will be in an increasingly dysfunctional society. John Dewey raised similar concerns, lamenting the “impersonalization of the human soul”, with this marked by the
“quantification of life, with its attendant disregard of quality; its mechanization and the almost universal habit of esteeming technique as an end, not as a means, so that organic and intellectual life is also ‘rationalized’” (Dewey, 1932, p. 23-4; see also Guerreiro Ramos 1981, pp. 75-101).

Within academic public administration the educative focus has been a bit less direct. Instead, it is the responsibility of the administrator to play “an active and positive role… in facilitating citizen engagement” (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003, p. 79) to “help citizens articulate and meet their shared interests” (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000, p. 553) through “involvement in programs of civic education” (p. 555; see also Ventris, 1991, p. 7-8). Perry does explicitly call for the “renewal of civic education” (2007a, p. 12-13) and “societal learning” (2007b, p. 20-1), while Bresser Pereira mentions obrigações, deveres, and responsabilidade in his advocacy of the res publica (1997). Yet while administrators can provide citizens with information, they cannot make citizens read it and become engaged. This leaves unaddressed the obligation of citizens.

The public manager’s response: communication

What Dumont and I have especially sought to emphasize instead is the importance of communication. Given the difficulty inherent in trying to facilitate the articulation of shared interests among a population often at best indifferent to this, at worst hostile to it, the single major reform to be introduced into public affairs education might involve a more sophisticated understanding of communication. It has been absent certainly from the English language literature. By way of illustration, we surveyed a dozen English-language public administration/management textbooks (Candler and Dumont, 2010) for references to communication, yet found only two (Stillman, 2000 and Perry, 1996) with chapters on the topic.

Rather than education, McGregor argues that public servants should simply provide the information that allows citizens to stay informed, in terms of realistic assessments of the possibilities of public programs, and through…civic capital formation. Here the goal is to enhance the knowledge base of public affairs so that citizens can understand how real public affairs operate, how practical problems affect public affairs, what the action options are, and what the criteria are by which options can be judged. In general, the goal is to spread the pools of public affairs knowledge around to enough centers of public affairs discussion that truly experimental and competing approaches to problem solving can be attempted. (McGregor, 1984, p. 130; see also Antunes, 2002, p. 133-5)

Dumont and I agree, though the responsible public administrator may need to adopt a more public intellectual role, and proactively push this information out, especially in terms of challenging the egregious dissemination of misinformation like those which characterized the recent US midterm elections. To paraphrase the old (English language) saying about trees falling unheard in forests: if one communicates but no one receives the message, what was the point?

The importance of communication in relationships between administrators and civil society is evident in the importance attached to communication in Simon’s Administrative Behavior, as “essential to the more complex forms of cooperative behavior” (Simon, 1997, p. 115). Alberto Guerreiro Ramos agreed, arguing that “a comunicação, não considerado em seu sentido vulgar,
constitui, hoje, capítulo eminente da teoria administrativa” (1966, p. 14). Equally important, Guerreiro Ramos makes the case for a more sophisticated understanding of the theory of communication:

No modelo taylorista de fábrica, o instrutor intervinha apenas para exclarecer a mensagem vinda de cima… Na verdade, mediante fluxos unilaterais de informações, as organizações tendem a insensibilizar-se para certos imperativos de trabalho e de produtividade considerados importantes hoje. Concebe-se, assim, a comunicação como fluxo de mensagens, informações, sinais, não apenas no sentido vertical descendendent, mas também ascendent, e ainda no sentido horizontal, ou seja, interdepartamental. (p. 15)

Effective public relations tools can increase the likelihood of administrators turning latent publics into constructive, active publics. Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), whose utilization is more widely known as e-government in the public sector (Fonseca, 2001, p.p. 95-100), are one of the newest tools available to public administrators to provide services, disseminate information, as well as to receive feedback from stakeholders (Pereira, 2003; Sanchez, 2003, pp. 89-96). However, technology is not a panacea. Along with “digital divide” issues (or, for Lau, “la fracture numérique” 2004, p. 227-8), Vitalis and Duhaut refer to “le risqué de déshumanisation” (2004, p. 321) as a result of face-to-face interaction now being mediated through a machine, while Sanchez notes that ICTs will only open government to citizens if government chooses to use it for this (2003, pp. 96-117).

Despite this, the case for a better understanding of the need for communication in public administration scholarship and teaching has gained little traction (Silva and Oliveira, 2009, p. 210). Garnett and Kouzmin state the problem well:

Despite significant, even revolutionary, changes in the way individuals, organizations, and nations communicate and despite extensive treatment of political communication, rhetorical and speech communication, and other branches of communication, administrative communication has lacked the scholarly and practical attention it deserves. (1997, p. v)

The citizen’s response: responsible citizenship

By definition, civic responsibility is the responsibility of citizens, not public administrators. Still, the main point of this paper is that it is surely correct to task the public administrator with encouraging participation, communicating, and facilitating dialogue to develop shared interests. However, these efforts will remain futile if public administration theory, and public administration practice, fail to also incorporate civic responsibility as a fundamental component of good governance. Yet the issue of civic responsibility has, at best, been recognized in passing in contemporary public administration teaching and scholarship. Dumont and my survey of a dozen major textbooks in public affairs mentioned above, for instance, shows that none includes a substantial discussion of civic responsibility.

The recent public administration literature in Portugal highlights the importance of civic responsibility. After the revolution of 1974 the country simultaneously adopted elements of market-based, socio-centric, and state-centric approaches (Mozzicafreddo 2001b, p. 146; see also 2001a, p. 8; Fonseca, 2003, p. 317; and especially Mendes 2006). Yet despite this broad drawing
on major paradigmatic approaches to governance, Portuguese scholars have also called for civic responsibility. Mozzicafreddo laments a citizenry demanding rights “sem grande consideração sobre os seus deveres” (2001b, p. 145); while Antunes points to the necessity of “a motivação e responsibilização das cidadãos” (2002, p. 135; see also Tavares 2003, p. 25; Fonseca 2003, p. 318). It is also worth noting that Eduardo Fonseca attributes a “papel preponderante” to information communications technologies in the “consolidação e desenvolvimento da democracia” (2001, p. 91).

In his January 2009 inaugural address, US president Barack Obama challenged Americans that

What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility - a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task. This is the price and the promise of citizenship.

Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira identifies, as a key dimension of civic responsibility, the willingness of citizens to pay for the services they demand (2007, pp. 127-30). The recent riots in French streets, and the ‘mid-term’ elections in the United States, suggest that this challenge has been roundly rejected, at least by many in these two societies. The French protestors want more services than they are willing to pay for, and the American ‘Tea Partiers’ are unwilling to pay for the services they receive. Ironically, given the mutual antipathy of the French left and the American right, the two groups differ little in their civic irresponsibility.

American public administration has done little to combat the tendency of mean-spirited, uninformed and so irrational populism to trump the challenge of civic responsibility. With the inauguration of ENA Brasil, I hope Brazil avoids this fate.

References


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