COORDINATION OF SOCIAL COMPLEXITY THROUGH PUBLIC POLICIES

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ABSTRACT

Social complexity assumes the interrelation of different actors and systems with marked autonomy to define their own interests and operating procedures. In this context, social coordination models are developed that combine the autonomy of actors and systems with coherence around objectives. Based on examples, the article reviews the current issues of coordinating complexity through public policies, models of policy networks, and the role played by social representation in public policy. We conclude that the high reflexivity of these models allows, even with limitations, the combination of the principles of autonomy and coherence in the operation of public policies.

Keywords *- Complexity, Coordination, Policy Networks, Public Policy.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most characteristic processes of contemporary society is, from a sociological point of view, its growing trend towards greater social complexity (Habermas, 1990; Luhmann et al., 2013). This can be described in three dimensions. First of all, at a concrete level, it supposes the proliferation of multiple private, public, quasi-private or semipublic organizations, national and supranational corporate actors, transnational protest movements, local or regional representation groups and individualized participation in various social spaces (Mascareño, 2010). Secondly, in a social dimension, the propensity for greater complexity implies that each of these fields is organized around its own interests and operating procedures, so that the most probable result of such an operation is a collision of interests (Nicholson et al., 2005) and the conflict between the procedures of each field. Finally, in a temporal dimension, social "complexity" (hereinafter, complexity) supposes that substantive interests and their related procedures establish precise temporal priorities and their own self-regulatory mechanisms to achieve compliance, according to requirements that ensure the continuity of each field (Freeman, 2000). In a word, complexity involves a differentiation of contemporary society into various systems and actors with increasing autonomy of expectations and operating procedures.

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Most countries of the south have not been immune to this process of complexity. In Chile, for example, at least in the last three decades, the classic union organizations and popular actors have been joined by a series of new groups based on diverse interests: youth groups, the elderly, feminists, homosexuals, migrants, environmentalists, territorial communities, urban rights, consumers, human rights and citizens, others of a neo-religious nature, artistic communities, and indigenous and student movements of different types (Guzman-Concha, 2012). Added to this is the diversification of public entities to attend to these actors (new ministries, undersecretaries, superintendencies, regulatory agencies), mechanisms such as negotiation tables, committees of experts, study commissions, ethics, as well as the proliferation of organizations of the called the third sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), national and transnational economic organizations and various private agents in various transnational social fields (Domingues, 2008). All this specific diversification of systems, organizations and actors implies the emergence of interests that are substantially contradictory to each other, which gain autonomy by establishing their own operating procedures and temporary agendas to achieve their expectations. Faced with this, the question arises about the capacity of the state, through public policies, to absorb and articulate diverse demands, conflicting with each other and with expectations of compliance that do not allow much temporary flexibility. The concept of public policies can be understood as a set of administrative and legal measures deployed within the state framework for the treatment of social problems and the orientation of actors to certain behaviors (Kraft and Furlong, 2009). During the 20th century, public policies in Chile followed two opposing models in different historical periods: one of the state-centric type characterized by considerable state intervention with a developmental substrate, based on planning and oriented towards the incorporation of the middle classes and popular sectors (1932-1973), and another marked by the withdrawal of the state and the emphasis on macroeconomic policies (1973-1989) (Arellano, 1985). The following period was characterized by a double movement: on the one hand, the (political) attempt to return to state centric formulas prior to 1973 and, on the other, the structural impossibility of doing so on a model notoriously marked by neoliberal reforms. This is especially visible in the educational, labor, collective goods and services, health, pension and social security systems, all of them with high levels of privatization in their modes of operation (Oppenheim, 2018).

CENTRAL ELEMENTS FOR A SOCIAL COORDINATION PERSPECTIVE

Based on the principles of coherence and autonomy, Lechner (1997) has identified three basic forms of social coordination: political coordination, market coordination, and network coordination. Characteristics of the first are its centralization, hierarchy, and exclusively public orientation; characteristic of the second is its decentralized, horizontal and unintentional character. The third form, which combines vertical and horizontal communication, supposes reciprocal dependence and is oriented towards the articulation of interests in a common theme through competitive cooperation. In this work he reserves the concept of "coordination" only for the third case. Extending this concept to hierarchical state and market modes of regulation only dilutes its specificity and novelty. What Lechner calls "political coordination" has regularly been known as state intervention or social

control (Stone, 1994) and in the case of "market coordination", Hayek (1986) already spoke of "catalaxy" or market self-regulation. The fact that market actors also show autonomy in interests and procedures constitutes them in a case of analysis, not in the paradigm of social coordination. Coordination, in the sense exposed here, only arises when some agent – public or private – seeks to regulate the autonomous dynamics of actors and systems, specifically, socially and temporally guiding their performance. In this sense, the proposed concept of coordination must be distinguished from other public-private relationship models:

- Development interventionism, a privileged model in the Latin American context for much of the 20th century, characterized by state control of the productive structure.
- The corporatist control, which is distinguished by the cooptation and state definition of objectives and orientations of action of private agents (visible in populist contexts).
- Regulatory institutionalism, typical of analyzes of conflicts of interest and power regulations.
- Self-regulation, characteristic of market operation in neoliberal contexts.

Another central element of managing such complexity is, as emphasized by French et al. (2021), outcomes, which are essential for evaluating the success of public policy actors. The authors argue that all agents – governments, philanthropic agencies and public sector organizations – are paying greater attention to societal outcomes in responding specific forms of complexities, namely compositional, experiential, dynamic, and governance. As such, coordination assumes the high complexity of the relationships between actors and systems, their substantive and procedural autonomy, and the asymmetry of interests between them (Scharpf, 1994). For this reason, it recognizes that these actors cannot be directed authoritatively (as in the interventionist and corporatist model) and that the conflict of interest can be dealt with deliberately and not only subjected to power transactions (as in normative institutionalism). But at the same time, coordination moves away from pure self-regulation (typical of the emerging market order) and establishes general criteria for the development of specific purposes in relation to problems of public interest (Bartle and Vass, 2007). Coordination is a balance between autonomy and coherence.

Such a balance seems appropriate to face the complex dynamics of actors and systems. Two dimensions open up in this regard: a sociological one and a historical one. The sociological substratum of social coordination is found in the deployment of the functional differentiation process, that is: "the constitution of various relatively autonomous functional systems, structured around certain internal logics" (Jessop, 1998). Its historical substratum is related to the crisis of the centralized planning model and the European welfare state, which led to financial atrophy and the juridification of social spheres known as "eurosclerosis" (Bundgaard-Pedersen, 1997; Peruzzotti, 2003, for the Latin American case). From the process of functional differentiation, systems, organizations and actors emerge that question the capacity of the state to direct its actions through planning or authoritative interventions in the definition of its interests and procedures. From planning crises emerges the need for an alternative that, respecting systemic autonomy, is capable

of directing its operation to the parallel realization of expectations. In the debate around social coordination, three candidates have clearly emerged that meet these conditions: policy networks (Mayntz, 1993; Lechner, 1997; Messner and Meyer-Stamer, 2000; Scharpf, 1994; Swartz, 1996), contextual orientation through deliberation tables (Badam et al., 2018; Wolff and Crockett, 2011), and the model of reflective law or politics of options (Teubner, 1986). As a summary, it can be said that as social coordination strategies,

- They assume the capacity to introduce coherence in the interrelationship of systems and autonomous actors, guiding them to specific tasks.
- They develop a common vision around a problem area aimed at building positive-sum relationships.
- They promote a tolerable level of self-limitation of autonomy, without this implying questioning the central interests of each participant.
- They are "operationalized" through the articulation of procedures rather than by generalized normative principles.
- They aspire to increase the reflexivity of systems and actors by paying attention to the consequences of their autonomous operations.

Social coordination through public policies entails, in this way, the combination of two principles: on the one hand, the coherence that a panoramic vision of the interests and procedures of different systems and actors can provide (Mascareño, 2010) and, on the other, the autonomy of these to define those interests and self-organize (Scharpf, 1993; Pleyers, 2010). Coherence is provided by a state look at social problems. Autonomy is characteristic of systems and actors in complex contexts. With the combination of both, the creation of hybrid zones is proposed, in which public policies can promote and guide towards the production of a good or service, without this meaning intervening state-centrically in autonomous systems and actors for the generation of that. While coherence aims to establish coordinated efforts among those involved, autonomy ensures that the various systems and actors involved can also obtain returns for their interests and operate, in most cases, with their own procedures. Coordination through policies is, in this sense, a situation of double contingency (Kaufmann, 2015), that is, both the state operation and that of autonomous systems and actors maintain their differentiated expectations, but are linked concretely, socially, and temporarily in a policy issue (policy issues) from which they can obtain differentiated but coordinated returns (Scharpf, 2000). It is a positive sum aspiration, rather than a zero sum game. Social coordination is, in this sense, a response to the compulsion to integrate state centric policies based on planning, as well as a rejection of the impossibility of a "common vision" in the face of relevant social problems for the actors (Willke, 2007).

CURRENT ISSUES OF COORDINATING COMPLEXITY THROUGH PUBLIC POLICIES

Each question of our daily life embraces a multiplicity of dimensions inseparable from each other. However, these questions are most often treated separately. The sectoral approach to public policies bears witness to this every day. The multiplicity of systems, ignoring each other, accentuates the feeling of low effectiveness in responding to people's needs. In a now globalized system, taking into account the links between the different dimensions of a problem seems as delicate as it is essential. Gand and Periac (2018) show that multi-actor governance is one of the two contemporary joint movements for the transformation of public action, the other being territorialization. Their deployment faces difficulties in managing the complexity inherent in public policy approach. Based on the example of assistance to caregivers, they conclude that while complexity is accompanied by a proliferation of information, initial extensions concern the development and use of intermediation instruments in a logic of cognitive synthesis. Another aspect of the subject is related to politicians.

On the other hand, within such complexity, according to Rocard (2008), the politician's task is not to investigate these problems, but only to make their solution possible. It is appropriate from the outset to perceive with finesse what the people want to hear, to tell them with emphasis and a little emotion and, having thus become the holder of an executive mandate, to know how to surround us with qualified experts needed to address and resolve the problems of life in society.

The emergence of the dynamics of cocreation of public policies within complex institutional contexts is another undervalued research topic. One case study conducted by Lorey et al. (2019) analyzed the emergence of such dynamics by mobilizing the concepts of cocreation, leadership, and managerial innovation, as well as undertaking a longitudinal study integrating 35 interviews. In the setting of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage routes, their results showed that: (1) the cocreation of public policies is a long-term process linked to changes in the leadership of the stakeholders; (2) this is made possible by the emergence of associative border actors, the agents of managerial innovation.

Last but not the least, although the benefits of using robust evidence to develop and implement public policy are widely recognized, evidence-based public policy is under fire from several directions. Today, government leaders, senior officials, and international organizations have often endorsed evidence-based policymaking (Bogenschneider and Corbett, 2021). However, in modern policymaking, evidence-based approaches often struggle with the complexity and intractability of many policy questions. Proponents of evidence-based approaches have asserted that building a robust and diverse evidence base is essential for better decision making and performance management (Nudurupati et al., 2024). This perspective has gained considerable momentum in OECD countries over the past four decades. Specialized units dedicated to the collection and analysis of economic, social and scientific information have been widely created at the national and international levels. It was agreed that rigorous program evaluation should be rolled out more widely (Sun et al., 2020). Processes have also been developed to ensure that information on complex topics is better shared and coordinated, so that strategic advice can be based

on the best available data.[1] Champions of evidence-based policy see these challenges as requiring even greater investment in knowledge production and synthesis, as well as greater commitment to collaborative processes and knowledge exchange networks. Further progress has been made in some policy areas, with a renewed emphasis on investment in research and information systems and with the help of new knowledge networks to exchange information and work together, in the form of networks, on complex problems or systems.

THE POLICY NETWORK MODEL

The question of the interrelation between autonomous instances has a long tradition in organizational analysis. One can distinguish there dyadic relationships (Hasenfeld, 1972), action sets (Whetten and Aldrich, 1979) and organizational networks (organizational sets) (Granovetter, 1973). Applied to the problem of policies, this approach gives rise to the model of policy networks. In principle, this supposes the definition of rules for the realization of commitments between public and private agents, which allow a distribution of costs and benefits in the face of a common decision or a solution of problems – rules that in each case require participants to voluntarily limit their freedom of action which can lead to a model of mutually accepted organizational identities, competencies and spheres of interest (Mayntz, 1993: 15). In any case, there is no single definition in this matter. David Marsh and Rod Rhodes (1992) differentiate between community policy networks (few participants, strongly integrated, with high continuity and oriented towards one or two common interests) and thematic (greater number of participants, multiple interests and greater conflict).

Börzel (1998) has detailed two fundamental tendencies: the German one, which identifies policy networks as an alternative form of coordination to the hierarchy and the market, and the Anglo-Saxon one, which conceives them as a model of state-society relationship in a determined area. Bevir and Richards (2009), based on ethnographic studies, have added a third form, the decentralization of public policies (decentered policy network), based on the traditions and situated agency of the participants. A similar trend is followed by de Leon and Varda (2009) with their idea of "collaborative" public policy networks (collaborative policy networks), in which not only the composition of actors is examined, but also their degrees of institutionalization and the discursive exchanges between them.

The focus has also been extended to coordination problems in transnational spaces as a relationship between multiple levels of governance – local, regional, national, supra-national, global (Scharpf, 2000; Pal and Ireland, 2009) – or to legitimating issues related to constitutionalism overall (Kjaer, 2009). However, these trends can be defined as "a relatively stable set of relationships of a non-hierarchical and interdependent nature that allows various actors to connect, who share interests regarding a policy, exchange resources to achieve those shared interests and recognize that cooperation is the optimal way to achieve common goals" (Börzel, 1998: 254).

Koppenjan, Kars and van der Voort (2009) have clearly identified the political-sociological problem behind this model. On the one hand, political-democratic actors empha-

size the relationship between main agents and political authorities, while the relevant execution decisions are taken at decentralized (private, quasi-private) levels of governance. On the other hand, decentralized actors have the expertise and capacity to carry out their objectives (Bossert, 1998), but it is difficult for them to generate political support to avoid interventions from higher levels. In this sense, a policy network can be understood as the coupling of the verticality of representative democracy and the horizontality of the multiple forms of governance of private actors that are located outside the domain of relations of representative democracy. To achieve this coupling, Koppenjan et al. (2009) propose the development of a framework of conditions (framework setting) that regulates the relationship between participants and the procedural limits of joint action. In doing so, they must grapple with three sets of problems: complexity, interdependence, and the dynamics of any policy issue. The first of them must be overcome through a constant dialogue between the participants, the second by considering the framework of conditions as a loose coupling (Orton and Weick, 1990) that allows deviations in the face of possible contingencies and, the third, by means of an openness to learning from the very dynamics of implementation of politics.

Even in the case of loose connections, policy networks involve elements that encourage their maintenance. One of them is the mutual dependence of resources: funds, legitimation, execution capacities, information, and political-institutional elements (Park et al., 2009). Other highly relevant elements are socio-structural resources, that is, those "patterns of communication and exchange of resources between three or more actors" (Hatmaker and Rethemayer, 2008: 430) whose stability depends on the returns for those who sustain them. For its part, the social capital of the participants would also contribute to a better performance of the network and thus to its continuity (Sandström and Carlsson, 2008). However, a central aspect of its operation seems to be its operation based on the production of collateral goods, that is, goods that the state wants, but cannot produce due to lack of resources and expertise, and that the private sector cannot. They occur due to a lack of guarantees in the face of the emergence of incentives for opportunistic agents (free riders) or of an appropriate framework of conditions (Poulton and Lyne, 2009). Collateral goods correspond to a structural reformulation of collective goods whose noncompetitiveness discourages their production. In terms of policy networks, collateral goods imply mutual (public-private) dependency on resources, a framework for their operation, relatively stabilized patterns of communication and exchange, policy issue orientation, and a high level of knowledge use and executive abilities. La Porte (1975: 3) underlined this concept of dependency by indicating their tightening in terms of spontaneous and purposive group connections which affect not only social dynamics but also well as political movements.

The lack of financial resources, specialized knowledge, and execution capacity, together with the infrastructure deficit that existed at the beginning of the 1990s, were key incentives for the development of collateral assets in the public works sector. Until the paradigm shift fueled by new public management, financing and execution were state-owned. Towards the end of the 1970s, contracting out for the construction and maintenance of public works was introduced, but the design and administration remained centralize. With the concessions system, public agents fundamentally have a regulatory role. The other

functions are in the hands of private agents in the different regulations: highways, airports, water system, prisons, ports, among others.

In the terms previously exposed, we can speak here of a policy network in formation. Public and private agents gather around the production of collateral goods under a specific regulation, in which costs and benefits are distributed in a self-regulated manner by a legal and deliberative framework. This framework is made up of the relevant legal institutes, contracts such as build-operate-transfer agreements, or design-build-operate-transfer and conciliation and arbitration commissions (Adekilekun et al., 2013). While the first two establish the award and implementation procedures, the latter are oriented to controversies that arise in the execution and operation phases. The deliberative space that these two instances open up is central to its constitution as a policy network (Hajer et al., 2003), inasmuch as they give reflexivity to the legal framework itself in the face of changing conditions in the contract environment. Especially with the conciliation commission, communication and exchange patterns are stabilized between the agents in the face of controversies that, if not resolved, are known by the same commission now in the form of an arbitration commission. Both parties can appeal to the conciliation commission: for breach of contract due to force majeure or destruction of works, for example, in the case of the state (Brunner, 2009); due to modification of services or rates, delays attributable to the state or suspension of the concession, in the case of private companies.

These elements are characteristic of policy networks. First, in these projects of high complexity and technological investment, knowledge is distributed (Kenis and Schneider, 1994). Not only is the state aware of its limitations in this regard, but also the formation of consortia and a panel of experts (conciliation commission) evidences the distribution of knowledge among private agents. It could be pointed out that not only social capital contributes to network performance, but also – mainly – cultural capital in the form of knowledge (Mu et al., 2008). Second, the self-constitution of the commission in terms of rules and procedures, and the flexibility of dispute resolution channels that it opens reveal the operation on the principle of "autonomy of the will" of the parties (Mereminskaya and Mascareño, 2005), which indicates a reflective exercise of self-involvement and self-limitation of the actors involved. Third, the fore-going implies that the discussed renegotiation of contracts (Guasch et al., 2007; Rizvi and Engel, 2009) is immanent to the flexible nature of a policy network. An indeterminable amount of risks flow into them and make the dilemma between proceeding and not proceeding (go/no-go) a problem of risk modeling and, therefore, of knowledge management (Rodriguez and Edwards, 2008). The proliferation of complementary agreements is the consequence of this risk management, and the project to modify the concessions laws was its institutionalized response.

Fundamental in any policy network is the multiplication of observations, particularly in matters of public works with consequences for other fields. Likewise, the incorporation of knowledge is decisive for a better performance of the network. However, the non-inclusion of private actors in it verticalizes governance relationships and constitutes a limitation to the decentralized nature of a policy network. It is not only about the exclusion of representatives of the concessionaires, but mainly of the public affected by the works (Carpintero and Siemiatycki, 2016). The non-incorporation of possible affected parties increases the risk of decisions, since they are made without explicit consideration

of the public (Dworkin and Goldwasser, 2007). This leads to ex post reactions and ultimately to higher transaction costs.

In short, if the central dilemma of policy networks is the confrontation between the verticality of democratic-representative institutions and the horizontality of private forms of governance (Koppenjan et al., 2009), the proposed modifications seem to emphasize the lines of verticality before those of horizontality. This tends to reduce the degrees of autonomy of the actors and even their options for participation in a policy network, with the consequent disincentives to form part of it: if once the legislation is open it tends to reduce the spaces of freedom, the policy networks they can acquire a ritualistic character and lose effectiveness as a decentralized coordination mechanism.

SOCIAL REPRESENTATION AND COOPERATION IN PUBLIC POLICIES

That crisis situations appeared during the last three or four decades in the world is indisputable. The collapse of communist societies is the most conspicuous example of this: there, it is indeed a question of crisis, that is to say of a situation where a system is threatened in its identity and ends up breaking down. It is only through an inadmissible misuse of language that one can use the same term crisis to designate the difficulties, conflicts and imbalances which characterize the states of Western Europe. However, the Cassandres have not failed to announce to us for fifteen years the crisis of these states, crisis of the welfare state, crisis of governability, and crisis of democratic representation, to name a few. The powerful economic mutations of which these societies are the object and their corollary, the thrust of social exclusion, have not generated a major political crisis so far (Smith, 2015). Not that these states have remained immobile in their structures and their modes of action. They have been the seat of multiple redevelopments which seem to have made it possible to guarantee a fairly good political and social stability. What therefore needs to be explained is not the tendencies towards crisis but rather the way in which the European states have so far succeeded in averting them (Webber, 2019). To approach this problem, it is necessary to postulate that these states were capable of learning to adjust their action in these new environments. Who says learning, immediately says mobilization of intellectual resources – information, know-how, symbols and values – with a view to influencing existing practices, legitimizing and institutionalizing the adjustments resulting from practice.

Like any social activity, the conduct of public policies is exercised through a system of representation whose characteristics we would like to analyze. Here as elsewhere, social play cannot be analyzed as a kind of mechanical reaction of individuals or groups already formed to scattered stimuli.[2] The variations of the environment only become significant facts insofar as they can be named and interpreted. Any social action therefore implies an operation of social definition of reality, which is both constitutive of the social actor and largely predetermines his line of conduct (Oliver, 2012). This operation mobilizes certain knowledge and certain social norms. It implements a number of causal assumptions. The current economic difficulties, for example, can be attributed as much to the emergence of the Ayatollahs and the oil crisis, to the invasion of immigrant workers, to a sharing of income that is too favorable to wage earners, or to the impact of new technologies on the

conditions of international competition, etc. Each of these hypotheses involves the selection of a set of significant facts and the simultaneous concealment of other phenomena considered residual or marginal. These interpretations are also constructed according to values and symbols that guide both the search for facts and the strategies of the actors. The spontaneous xenophobia of the National Front voter directs him towards the first two hypotheses (Jackman and Volpert, 1996). Business leaders will more readily seek a diagnosis of the crisis in the third (Kitschelt and McGann, 1997). Employees and leftwing movements will see, in the fourth, reasons to create a new modern republic mobilizing all the solidarity efforts of the nation around a modernizing project, etc. (Simmons, 2018, for France). The selection of an interpretive scheme therefore largely depends on the position of social groups in the social structure. But there is more; the constitution of social actors also depends on these patterns of interpretation. Indeed, there is no immediate relationship between objective interests emanating from the social structure and the social actors who participate in the political controversy: the formation of the actor also depends on the mode of definition of social reality (Fischer, 2019; Grimble and Wellard, 1997).

The processes of social definition of reality therefore depend on two relatively stable characteristics of any political system. They must fit into representations that ensure social integration (Jodelet, 2008). Indeed, the relevance of a social definition depends on its ability to fit into the reference models that claim to make society intelligible and which are the basis of these legitimization processes (Meyer, 2001). They must, moreover, be compatible with the modes of social mediation that characterize a given society. It is this process of modeling social reality that we are aiming for with the notion of public policy reference system. We will define the specificity of these frames of reference by showing the analogies and the differences with respect to the notion of paradigm used in the sociology of scientific controversies. The repositories of public policies include three dimensions which, combined, bring them closer and differentiate them from other types of representation:

- a cognitive dimension; the frames of reference provide the elements for the causal interpretation of the problems to be solved,
- a normative dimension; they define the values which should be respected in dealing with these problems,
- an instrumental dimension; the reference frameworks define the principles of action which must guide the action according to this knowledge and these values.

The repositories evoke the notion of paradigm developed by Kuhn in his history of scientific controversies. He uses the concept of paradigm in two different senses: “On the one hand, it represents the whole set of beliefs, recognized values and techniques that are common to the members of a given group. On the other hand, it denotes an isolated element of this set: the concrete solutions which, reused as a model or as an example, can replace the explicit rules as the basis of solutions for the enigmas which subsist in normal science (Kuhn, 1983). The analogy with our notion of frame of reference is striking. At a first level, here too, the frame of reference constitutes a set of beliefs, values and techniques which structure the scene of public policies. At the second level, the repository appears as a set of tried and tested recipes which are supposed to make it possible to

respond to hitherto unsolved problems. The opposition between "normal science" – all devoted to the solution of still of institutionalized beliefs - and the scientific revolution can also be transposed into the field of public policy. We will then oppose, in the same way, the debates that are played out within the same frame of reference and the controversy that bears on the frame of reference itself (Rein and Schon, 1991). The particularity of the controversy lies in the fact that it cannot be resolved by an agreement on the implementation of a proven recipe from the old reference system. In these situations, the debate is fundamentally about the frames of reference in which facts, values, theories are integrated (Rein, 1983). Given the multiple realities created by the frames of reference concerned, the disagreement of the participants also relates to the very nature of their disagreement.

From this more differentiated view of the frame of reference, we can consider several paths in the process of intellectual learning. The first presents the succession of frames of reference as a direct result of the battle of ideas; this seems to be the case when the political debate seems to clearly oppose the supporters of very contrasting visions of the world; this is the impression given by the political debate of the early 1980s when it seemed that the political elites were clashing around radically opposed "society projects" (Davis, 2014). We quickly saw that the battle of words to conquer power should not be confused with the moments of inflection of the reference models of public action. In reality, the hypothesis of a learning model that would start from a change in the hard core and then diffuse towards the protective belts is not the most likely (Harsch et al., 2009). If we take the example of the problems of the welfare state in France, for example, it is more likely to make the following hypothesis. The undeniable change in the ideological climate exerts its effects indirectly by gradually instilling a different logic of action into the programs and action plans of the protective belt without there being any direct questioning of the principles and strategies which constitute its central core (Bourdieu, 2001).

However, these debates on the climate, the general framework of action are only one of the aspects of the construction of the reference systems, it is also necessary that these are compatible with the representations specific to the field concerned. The simplest situation to analyze is one where a powerful profession or a large body of the State exercises an unchallenged hold over the domain (Benson, 1975). But the most frequent case will be that where several professional groups are in conflict to make prevail a definition of the situation which reinforces their identity and opens avenues of expansion to them. Likewise, the coincidence between the boundaries of the professional culture and that of the major organizations in the sector is only a hypothesis (Rosenzweig and Singh, 1991). In many cases, public action must be constructed by taking into account the images, the references that each of the organizations structuring the field has forged for itself and the action to be undertaken. The more a field is fragmented and divided by professional cultures and images of multiple and rival organizations, the more important and difficult will be the task of building a reference system articulating these different representations. The difficulties in implementing local social policies are, in France, a good example of the effects of strong fragmentation by professional bodies and by rival organizations.

These suggestive analogies between public policy benchmarks and scientific paradigms should not, however, conceal their differences. These result from the necessarily ambiguous and contradictory nature of political action. It is not a question here of better solving the enigmas and challenges of knowledge, but of limiting conflicts, of curbing the effects of contradictions which could threaten social cohesion. It is a matter of responding to contradictory imperatives of legitimization and regulation. The influence of a frame of reference will be all the greater if it has been able to present a more credible reconciliation between these contradictory imperatives. It should be noted, for example, that the welfare state model takes root in France when the solidarist tradition meets the new conceptions of Keynesian macroeconomics and thus makes it possible to reconcile growth and social justice. Conversely, the neoliberal message does not go down well in the social field as long as it is presented exclusively as a response to the demands of rationing public expenditure.

CONCLUSIONS

With its current limitations, the incipient formation of social coordination mechanisms through public policies can be seen in various country cases. This seems to be a viable and necessary option for the deployment of such policies when resorting to vertical state control proves inappropriate to face growing social complexity. Doing it this way implies advantages both for the State and for private actors. Without losing the general orientation of thematic priorities, the first part is relieved of the task of an exhaustive design of society and the bureaucratization and temporary investment that this entails; the latter can make their practical and technical knowledge, their experience as affected by the consequences of politics, available to this design, and thereby gain recognition and autonomy of action. As indicated by Christiansen and Bunt (2016: 41), “design of public services starts already at the policymaking stage because policies effectively establish the criteria and the framework that make specific products and services possible”. Design management has brought much to commercial organizations, but it is still undervalued in public organizations. Coordination mechanisms such as policy networks, deliberation systems and the policy of reflexive law options are an attractive alternative when traditional political structures are pressured by actors and systems that demand, or already exercise, autonomy and claims for participation and recognition. However, these same structures constitute limits to its realization, so a tension is more to be expected than a change in this sense. The deployment of this tension will show its future viability.

The debate on public policies seems to be limited by a double fence: (i) closure by the professions that claim to be the only ones able to determine what is good for society in their field of competence (Henry, 2015), and (ii) closure by the ruling elite, which poses as the sole rational interpreter of the constraints weighing on social cohesion (Hoppe, 2010). The result is a radical impoverishment of public debate, examples of which are legion. Thus, in the health field for example, public debate has always stopped at the

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borders of the doctor's area of competence (Jasanoff, 1987). At best, it was a question of debating the conditions of access to a healthcare system, never of discussing the contribution of this system to improving the state of health of the population. In health, as in the other sectors of the major collective services, the major professions have considered public opinion as a working mass, a potential source of mobilization to be used against the ruling elite to establish their expansionist project. But the layman, the citizen, even organized into a party, has never been a stakeholder in the debates that have determined the decisive orientations of health policies.

This limitation of the debate around public policies did not raise any major challenges for many years. No doubt the frames of reference constructed by the complex interaction of the ruling elite and the professions were in tune with the dominant social representations. For instance, during the "thirty glorious years", French society had seemed to adapt well to the tutelary authority of an elite who claimed to be able to guarantee it every day more growth, more social services and an honorable place in the international concert (Terrio, 2009). It is this adherence to the values and representations of the ruling elite that explains the progressive colonization by the latter of decisive centers of power.

It is this gap that explains the recourse both to neoliberalism and to various foreign models. Undoubtedly, the beginnings of the decade were first marked by the influence of neoliberalism and the American and British experiences. Models based on the radical dissociation between the social and the economic were needed to justify a resolute policy of curbing public expenditure, of eliminating overstaffing from businesses and, therefore, of training large groups of the population who would be permanently without job. This is the time when the ideal image of the boss changes, putting forward not the craftsman of social peace, but the virile hero who knows how to perform surgical cuts to save his business. The question of whether this neoliberal frame of reference can replace the old model of the welfare state and reinforce the legitimacy of public policies remains open.

NOTES

[1] See Hussain et al. (2021) for electric vehicles, Laufs and Waseem (2020) for police response to Covid-19, Dang et al. (2021) for healthcare professionals, among others.

[2] Bento et al. (2020), Mannheim (1952), Lewicki (2013) and Cooley (1902) provide timeless examples of these stimuli.

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ISSN 1662-1387