

PROCESSES OF STATE REFORMATION AND MODERNIZATION: A CHARACTERIZATION FROM THE LATIN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

LOS PROCESOS DE REFORMA Y MODERNIZACIÓN ESTATAL: UNA CARACTERIZACIÓN A PARTIR DE LA EXPERIENCIA LATINOAMERICANA

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Abstract

State reform in Latin America dates back at least a century (Spink, 1997), even though it used to be called “administrative reform” at that time. Whether we call these processes “reformation”, “modernization”, “institutional strengthening” or others, we can characterize them as positions and courses of action of those who lead the state, aimed at increasing the capacity of its institutional apparatus to resolve the problems. Socially problematic issues that make up its agenda and define its role in each historical moment. As its role

and agenda vary, so do reform and modernization strategies and decisions.

In this paper, I will try to characterize the nature of these institutional transformation processes from a conceptual perspective, using the experience of Latin America as a historical frame of reference. To do this, I will first analyze the relationship between desirable change scenarios and innovation gaps in public management. Then, I will distinguish between reforms “in” and “out” of the state. Finally, I will propose a preliminary classification of the reform processes, according to different analytical categories.

Key words: Institutional transformation processes, change scenarios, innovation, public management, state reformation and modernization.

Resumen

La reforma estatal en América Latina se remonta, al menos, a un siglo atrás (Spink, 1997), aun cuando por entonces se la solía denominar “reforma administrativa”. Sea que llamemos a esos procesos “de reforma”, “modernización”, “fortalecimiento ins-

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titucional” u otros, podemos caracterizarlos como tomas de posición y cursos de acción de quienes conducen el estado, dirigidos a elevar la capacidad de su aparato institucional para resolver las cuestiones socialmente problematizadas que conforman su agenda y definen su rol en cada momento histórico. Al variar su rol y su agenda, también varían las estrategias y decisiones de reforma y modernización.

En el presente trabajo intentaré caracterizar la naturaleza de estos procesos de transformación institucional desde una perspectiva conceptual, utilizando como marco histórico de referencia la experiencia de América Latina. Para ello, analizaré, en primer lugar, la relación entre escenarios de cambio deseables y brechas de innovación en la gestión pública. Luego, distinguiré entre reformas “hacia adentro” y “hacia afuera” del Estado. Finalmente, propondré una clasificación preliminar de los procesos de reforma, según diferentes categorías analíticas.

Palabras clave: procesos de transformación institucional, escenarios de cambio, innovación, gestión pública, reforma y modernización estatales.

Scenarios of change and innovation gaps

A wide and non-differentiated definition of the terms: innovation, reform and modernization,¹ would look at them as processes driving to the introduction of visible and significant changes in the management modalities of the state apparatus and/or the agencies that make part of it, particularly regarding technological and cultural matters. Talking about innovation in the public sector demands to explicit the comparison patterns respect of which it is possible to measure the quantity and quality of such produced changes. In that sense, options are multiple. The change can be estimated in comparison with an estimated situation considered as the base of the same aspect or phenomena observed; in terms of a standard or benchmark, or regarding a desirable situation. Each one of these options may lead to several results. And the validity of those several results will depend on, eventually, the purpose of the measurement or assessment of the change (Oszak, 2003).

his reflection is similar to that made by Behn (2003) when he asks himself why measuring the performance, to what responds that the purposes can be different and each one of them demands different measurements. On one hand, the production of innovation in the public management could be completely denied, be it because of changes are not evident or because the available measurement systems do not permit to detect it. Conceptually, however, it is difficult to conceive that the state institutions be completely immune to change, that nothing

¹ Schweinheim (2003) propose to conceptually differentiate the concepts of innovation, adaptation and modernization, processes that are closely related each other with the State reform but show differences in their respective contents and scopes. He also defines the concepts of creativity and autolearning (“the ability of the administrations to learn how to learn”

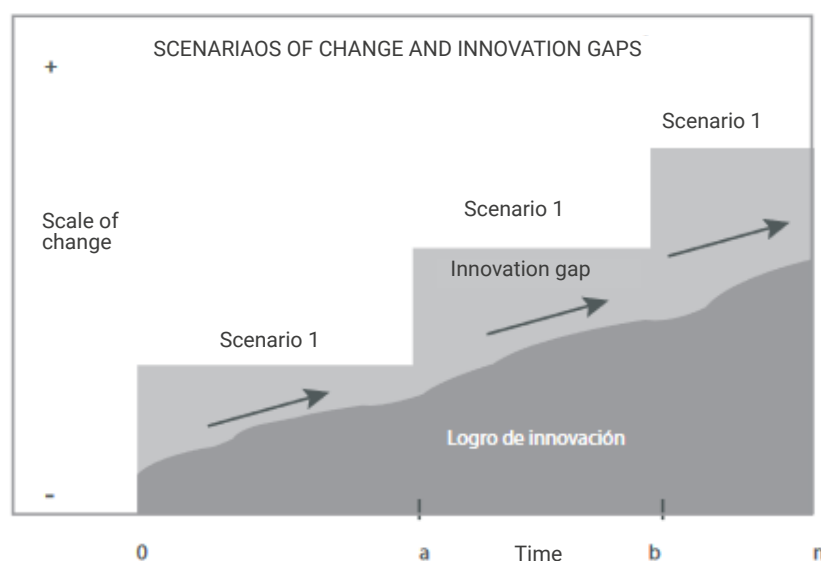
can move their crystalized structures, technologies and routine processes, its invariably repetitive behaviors. It will be unwise not to notice the change the State apparatus is common, permanent and does not wait for a “modernization strategy” rescues it from stagnation and sets it in motion. The real question is if the nature and speed of the innovations are related with the provided patterns regarding “good governance”, management quality, response to the citizen, institutional ability and other performance metrics that work as a standard to this field. Therefore, together with the achievement dimension, the “innovation gap” is also interesting, this is, the unresolved institutional ability deficits (Oszlak, 2003).

Let’s consider that this issue is key for the analysis, because the reform strategies, implicitly or explicitly, always set an ideal institutional scenario, a model to be reached and establish in an imaginary future. But, in addition, there are not models and scenarios that are forever frozen. Change in the public sector cannot be alien (actually, it should accompany) to the big transformations that, simultaneously, take place in the society, economy and the international context. Therefore, it is interesting to know if the innovation and reform in the public sector advances *pari passu* with the ones happening in those other macro-social and global spheres, if it has been left behind, or even if it has turned into the social change engine (Oszlak, 2003).

For every historical moment there is always an existent dominant paradigm about what it should be understood as “necessary State” or its other various alternative tags.

Verbose description on its main attributes full many libraries today; and different theories, approaches or interpretation have served, successively, to justify the need of its achievement, the maintenance of its validity or the transition to a different vision or scenario. This means that paradigms change and the expectations or visions about what is desirable tend to change, to crown it all, very fast. It is a natural process, equivalent to the one present in general with innovation on any technological field: every progress is quickly assimilated and becomes part of a higher threshold, which in turn, turns itself into a new base, a new starting point for successive innovations. Therefore, it could be inferred that at any moment that the effort and the degree of advance be considered regarding reforms, it could be or not sufficient for closing the gap separating a desirable scenario that, on the other hand, modifies itself at an accelerated pace. The following graph illustrates it (Oszlak, 2003, p.6).

Figure 1: Scenarios of change and innovation gaps.



Source: Own elaboration (Oszlak, 2003, p. 14).

Figure 1 allows to see various sequential scenarios located in different points (growing) in an imaginary scale of change.

The meandering line represents the deployed level of effort and the innovation reach for each moment in time, whereas the arrows shows the change direction (towards each existent scenario (1,2, 3, etc.)). Point a, b, ...n show moments of paradigmatic rupture, in which a new vision or change scenario is set. The white zone reflects the level of achievement in the transformation effort, while the grayish zone indicates the existent gap innovation for each moment in time. The graph is made in such a way that scenarios occur at a growing speed, as the innovation gap increases, which is the typical situation for many countries embarked on state reformation processes. As we have stated in other paper (Oszlak, 1999), in this reasoning there is no a state with an immutable goal that should be reached, but, on the

contrary, a “moving target” that, as the horizon line, is receding as the transformations are being made, and so creating new challenges.

Seen from this perspective, innovation becomes relative concept. Every assessment on the results reached by the public management, demands a comparison with the state of the art or with each epoch existing international standards. It would not have any sense gauge it in any other way, since from this point of view, presumably important change efforts might result irrelevant (Oszlak, 2003).

Some observers have stated that deep economic crisis are insurmountable obstacles for advancing in the state reformation processes. For example, in 2003, in CLAD’s VIII International Congress call for a panel, Paulo Motta asked to their panelist if the severe fiscal crisis that the countries from LAC had been through in previous years, had produced that consequence (Oszlak, 2003).

And he suggested that those countries public sector was facing a common challenge: how to reform the public management in a time of acute scarcity of resources. He mentioned, in this regard, that in that juncture, the state apparatus was been pressured to do more with less, and to imagine ways of spend less and being more efficient when achieving the results. There was a greater competition for budgetary resources, while the most of the state agencies were under shortcuts. Scarcity was imposing limitations not only to options among innovation strategies, but also for defining behavioral criteria before the crisis (Oszlak, 2003).

Among the main administrative problems raised by acute scarcity, Motta stated: (1) the resurgence of administrative obstacles; (2) the inefficiency image; (3) the individual frustrations and pessimism; and (4) the restrictions to a strategic vision. However, the author stated, those same issues seemed to create new practices and innovative solutions to the problems they were facing, which justified their identification, the assessment of their results, and the analysis of their possible impact on the society and on the state apparatus itself. (Oszlak, 2003).

In response to that provocative statement, we proposed that the acute scarcity of resources was not been a fundamental cause for the poor results achieved regarding the reform and innovation of the public management. Even in times of relative prosperity and low pressure on the budget, innovations were not significant. It would be naïve to imply a strict correspondence between state reformation and advances or setbacks of the economic cycle. Some

innovative experiences were done during periods of boom and others under critic conditions. There is not necessarily a causality relationship between the time of the cycle and adopting novelty policies, such as the commitment-letters with the citizen, the integrated financial administration, the participative budget or the state personnel files informatization.

It is possible to verify that:

- a. Even under situations of an increased government spending, important results were not achieved regarding the modernization of the internal management;
- b. Few could be done by the innovative efforts to correct the deformity of the state's production, which was way more determinant than the hypertropia of its institutional apparatus as a reason for a low performance;
- c. The disincentives (e.g. salaries) that may cause frustration and pessimism at individual level, were outweighed, in labor markets, with high unemployment rates, due to the benefits of security in public employment, and for that, they did not necessarily affect the performance;
- d. The quite common in the region politic discontinuity and the absence of sustainable innovation and reform projects, seemed to be more powerful variables to explain the poor rooting on the innovation and the narrow scopes of the state reforms (Oszlak, 2003).

In short, the scarcity of financial resources seems to be no serious obstacle for the innovation or reform of the state; but neither its influx is a necessary and sufficient requisite to reach them. In fact, the main sources of scarcity are due to inappropriate cultural patterns, effort discontinuity, lack of lea-

dership and a weak political will. More than monetary terms, state reformation and innovations tend to be way more expensive in terms of defeat resistances, transform cultures or seriously assume responsibilities for the governance results. (Oszlak, 2023).

Another key aspect to be considered regarding our topic here, and frequently many observers and evaluators of the state reformation omit is considering the effectuation of the innovation. When can it be said that a reform took place? At what time was any step adopted to formalize its validity?

When does a consulting company or an ad-hoc deliver to those responsible a technical solution to management problems? When is that reform effectively institutionalized, by having been incorporated into the culture and practice of the organization and into the organizational functioning? or, when instead of been limited to a "pilot" kind insular experience, that reform can be applied on other institutional spheres due to its multiplying effect?² (Oszlak,2003).

There is a lot of confusion about it. It is common that those responsible in the state agencies present institutional reports giving an account of the signature of agreements, the issue of resolutions or norms, the re-design of organigrams, the approval of re-engineering plans processes, the creating of te-

chnical manuals, the formulation of training plans, or the installation of computerized management systems, as if the provided purposes for their own initiatives had been reached. And it is probable that the most of those announcements or real decisions end up being ersatz of innovation, a set of good intentions, aimed at occupy new niches in that frustrated innovations grave yard that the public sector keeps opened at all times (Oszlak, 2003).

The trend of registering successful experiences, award the responsible ones, compile books of study cases tending to show "how to do it", has encourage the hope and created de illusion that change is possible, that is only about intelligently transplant the particularities of the original experience to another context, that it is enough with reasonably adapting the successful formula. (Oszlak,2003). Reforms are "custom-made suits". They must consider each country context, needs and circumstances to be successful. The same reforms may have different results for different countries.

By pointing fingers, we do not intend to be in the objectionable position of the ones who disbelieve these diffusion mechanisms usefulness. We just want to warn about the risks imbedded in supposing that exotic plants can be grown in any terrain, not knowing the -sometimes miraculously – combination of circumstances that have to be present together to the innovation and change occurs. But, in addition, and above all, we pretend to call the attention on the false belief that the voluntarism, per se, is enough for a reform to be effectively rooted. (Oszlak,2003).

² During two international meetings we had the opportunity to question David Osorn, the famous co-author of Reinventing Government, which had been, according to his knowledge, the proportion of the almost 100.000 municipalities existing in the United States that adopt an innovating contractual mechanism for the waste collection service cited on his best seller. There was no answer at all at any of the two times. (Oszlak, 2003).

Because of that the preoccupation for the effective verification of the change has to be extended to its sustainability. This is, it is not enough to prove whether the announcements are true or not, or if the sceneries that sometimes are placed as real reforms, are made of painted cardboard. Latin America public administrations record a long history of setbacks and failures of innovative projects launched under the best auspices. (Oszlak,2003).

“in” and “out” innovation reforms of the State

Frequently, when administration do the account of their success, they tend to include the adoption of policies that, strictly, are not innovations or a modernization of the public management at all. We are particularly talking about to those that instead of tending to a better state, just pursue a smaller state. Without prejudice of extend ourselves on this topic, let’s move up, coinciding with Barzelay (2002), that it should be considered as innovation or modernization those that this author names as “public management policies”. In essence, its results are measured in instrumental or technological terms and the locus of its application occurs “in” de state apparatus. But then, how the reforms and innovations that, instead of trying to transform some of the various used public management technologies, simply seek, trough actions towards “out” of the state, only to dismantle it should be called? (Oszlak,2003).

This question might look idle, since during the ninety’s decade, and part of this century first one, the transformation of the stated consisted, basically, in the implemen-

tation of the so called “first generation reforms”, unquestionably oriented to achieve a “smaller state” and not necessarily a “better state”. Is it licit to call innovation or reforms to truly institutional amputations that, more than changes towards inside the state, produce much more visible and permanent transformations in the society itself, especially in the market? (Oszlak,2003). This issue is of enormous relevance, particularly in the current circumstances, in which in the world (and also in our region) important political-ideological changes are happening, and many observers see as a return of the neo-liberalism, and that could mean the reiteration -perhaps modified- of formulas that in their projection, point to a state intervention reduction.

This orthodoxy now almost classic formula has been: a) privatize as much as possible, b) decentralize as much as possible any public service that could be delegated to state and international organizations; c) deregulate at maximum the market functioning; d) outsource all the support initiatives susceptible to do so; e) demonopolize the public and private management to promote competence and reduce costs; and f) lighten to the maximum the state personnel strength, by voluntary and early retirements. (Oszlak,2003).

When making a balance of these experiences, we can see there is a common ground: all “out” from the national State reforms implied to reduce its intervention and transform its role. In essence, they consisted in legal in nature modifications and in economic – financial transactions. From the legal point of view these consisted in:

- a. Create new regulatory frames,
- b. Subscribe concession contracts,
- c. Transfer domain titles,
- d. Contract third-party services,
- e. Eliminate regulations,
- d. Suppress regulatory agencies,
- g. End labor contracts,
- h. Prohibit the re-incorporation to the public function during certain periods of time,

and so on.

From the economic point of view, the mobilization and transfer of financial resources went with the required legal decisions and acts, habitually manifesting themselves in:

- a. Incomes from the selling of enterprises,
- b. Pay off and recovery of public debt,
- c. Collection of royalties from dealers,
- d. Payments to contractors of outsourced services,
- e. Public services update,
- f. Transfer of budgetary allocations to subnational governments,
- g. Compensations due to voluntary retirements,
- h. Removal of tariffs and rights in regulation agencies, etcetera. (Oszlak,2003).

On the contrary, these reforms did not produce innovations of technological natu-

re or perdurable changes, except for, indirectly, to the extent that the new privatized companies, subnational administrations, third-party service suppliers, ("peripheric privatization") or deregulating activities, had introduced new management technologies or different cultural trends. (Oszlak,2003).

Before the scarce results of the "first generation" reforms, LAC administrations, again with the sponsorship of the multilateral credit agencies, announced the "second generation" of reforms destined to produce innovation in the public management that look "into" the State. Unlike the first ones instead of mere legal and economic – financial transaction changes, these involved technological and cultural transformations. Its success relied, essentially, on the dynamics created between the political employees and the permanent bureaucracy.

Rhetorically, at least, since the middle of the eighties, the most important changes are manifested in more open governs, creation of accountability mechanisms, relocation of resources towards the most inclusive social policies and the implementation of merit and flexibility as criteria of self-management for the labor market in the public sector.

In these cases, the innovation consists in the integration of new technologies and management styles, new ways of managing what is public in nature: new kind of services, changes in the methodology for addressing social problems, different kind of controls, novel participation methods for the people, etcetera. The "in" reforms mainly affect variables associated to the organization and functioning of bureaucracy: its regulatory framework, organizational structure, personnel and material resources allocation,

management processes and procedures, ability of its agents their behavior regarding the production of goods, services and regulation under their responsibility. Innovations in management are not more than mere intents adjust those different parts and gears that conform the state machinery, so that in conjunction, this can better respond to the demands and restrictions of its social context (Oszlak,2003).

But there is something more: technological innovations do not work properly unless they be integrated to the administration culture. This implies a deep change in the willingness of the public servers to work under a different set of rules, which is verified when those servers have managed to interiorize the new rules and its axiological or moral fundamentals into their conscience, perceptions, attitudes and behavior. Then there must be a previous process of “naturalization” of those innovations in each agent expressions of behavior, so that a real institutionalization of the reforms can be produced. (Oszlak,2003).

The greater time required by the implementation of the reforms “towards inside” has, in turn, a decisive impact in its eventual failure, especially when the political discontinuity is high and, to crown it all, there is the use of discarding every past innovation experience imbedded in the administrative culture, no matter if an objective assessment might find enough merits to continue with its implementation. During the years when some countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, or Argentina were not going through political instability, brief conductions set records of low retention in office and only occasionally managed to position themselves be-

fore the need, and the instruments required for creating real innovations in the institutional management under their responsibility. (Oszlak,2003).

Among the main innovations that usually are included in the set of reforms oriented to the public management improvement, the following are highlighted:

- a. The organizational restructuring of the state apparatus, seeking a higher flexibility and adjusting to the management demands.
- b. The redesign of the state personnel staff, reassigning human resources in function of its numbers in accordance with the profiles and required competences for the development of the substantive support functions.
- c. The de-bureaucratization of norms, process and administrative procedures, in favor of a better service for the people and a process lower cost for the state and the users.
- d. The implantation of administrative career systems based on the competences and merits of the personnel, not only at recruiting and tender instances, but also at promotion, compensation and performance assessment.
- e. The constant training and develop of the personnel, through the updating of their skills and knowledge, and as well as their sensibilization towards values related to user’s rights and the public function ethic.
- f. The improvement of information systems and their computational support, in the several applications admitted and demanded by the growing complexity of the state activity.

- g. The introduction of panning, following-up, control and assessment of results mechanisms, specially through control charts and management contracts.
- h. The promotion of people's participation in the process of formulation of policies and the social control of the public management (Oszlak,2003).

In all those fields, LAC countries have tried, with different luck, to introduce innovations in the public management. This set of measures continues to be the hard core of reforms to be implemented for almost all Latin-America. This project is focused on four of them, which in general terms coincide with their description or are closely related with some of them.

The conceptual considerations we have proposed have been developed with a higher specificity by the various specialized areas, adding bibliographic references and introducing variables that permit to interpret the modernization scopes, modalities and tendencies of the state reformation in each one of them. Likewise, in the following section, we will propose a classification of the reforms in accordance with various criteria, classification that has been considered in the specialized studies with references compared to the cases respectively analyzed³.

³ Either Lenin, in the Soviet Union, as the leader of the Meiji restoration, in Japan, recommended to train the new band of public administrators into the new management technics developed in the United States.

Preliminary classification of the State norms

Having reach this far in the analysis and to address the third of the proposed topics, I will suggest a possible categorization of the state reformation and modernization initiatives. There are many classification criteria that can be used and each one of them would contemplate one or more options. A numbering, no doubt incomplete, of these possible criteria would include the following:

- a. According to its origin.
- b. According to its scope.
- c. According to its nature.
- d. According to its originality.
- e. According to its orientation.
- f. According to its rhythm.
- g. According to its conflictiveness.
- h. According to its implantability.
- i. According to its imposition style.
- j. According to its continuity.

Each criterion includes, naturally, several options that, in turn, might be classified according to polar alternatives, simple aggregation of heterogeneous models or typical situations along a constant. The combined consideration of all criteria and their respec-

tive component kind would allow us to get a typology of reforms that could result very useful for conceptually advance in the characterization of the reform strategies. In this section I will spread on the sense of according to each one of the abovementioned categories, making it clear that the types of reforms will be necessarily different according to the specialized area considered (i.e., professionalization, electronic govern, etcetera).

Origin of the reforms

The allusion to the origin of the reforms considers if they are idiosyncratic, originated in the same country or context in which they were conceived and implanted, or if they consisted in the transplantation of other countries well-known impact techniques or experiences. As a first kind example there is the Ombudsman institution in Sweden, commitment letters with the people in England or the participative budget in Brazil. It is even more common, in contrast, the adoption of reforms held in other contexts, to which highly positive impact has been attributed to and are part of the repertoire of successful cases or best practices.

The mimesis has been one of the fundamental levers for catapulting the adoption of innovation in the state institution and the public management. American Constitution, French codes, European double-entry accounting or North-American “scientific” administration, are remote examples of institution and practices that rapidly were generalized through the whole world and were

adopted in the most diverse contexts.³ the influence of the multilateral financial agencies and technical assistance (World Bank, UNDP, IDB, IMF) also operated as a “transmission band” of what they considered as best practices, imposing their adoption in the countries where the loans included institutional strengthening components.

The practice communities generated by international consultants around this mimetic model circulation, also explains to a large extent the implementations of these changes as waves, in similar times and for heterogeneous contexts.

Scope of the reforms

Many years ago, Nascimento (1970) stated a possible distinction between state reformation strategies, opposing the “globalist-opportunistic” reform to the “partial-gradual”. In fact, he anticipated two of the criteria proposed in this report -reform scope and rhythm-, and proposed to classify the Brazilian administrative reforms as of great scope and urgent ones. It is quite common that new governments, that pretend to make a strong politic-ideologic differences with their predecessors, launch wide spectrum reform framed in global strategies, surrounded by ceremonies. Illustrations of such, would include the Directing Plan for the Reform of the State of Brazil, designed by the Minister Bresser Pereira; the Democratic Reform of the Ecuadorian State, in 2007, or the Law for the Argentinian reform in the nineties.

Blue books or White Books of this type of reforms have been produced in countries as different as Spain and China or the ones integrating the British Community. In these, as it happened later in some Scandinavian countries, two decades ago surged a movement that originally Tony Blair called *joined-up government*, as a reaction to the New Public Management negative approach, with its emphasis on departmentalization and the creation of “vertical sites” in the state organization. This movement now known as *whole-of-government approach*, rescues the old need of promoting the integration of the government areas around the solution of common problems, fomenting the horizontal and vertical coordination, the creation of inter-ministerial cabinets, etcetera. According to this new approach, the “structural devolution”, that implied to transfer authority from the central politic-administrative power to regulating agencies, service provider organizations and public companies, it weakened the control, information and central government influence, stating institutional capacity problems and accountability (Christensen&Laegreid, 2001).

It is worth noting that the size of a country is not an obstacle to face reforms on a large scale. Between 1982 and 2013, the Popular Chinese Republic performed seven reforms of that kind. And over a century of reforms on the public sector in the United States, numerous similar experiences have been recorded in that country (March & Olsen, 1983), as the well-known Reinventing Government case (Osborn & Gaebler, 1994).

Nature of the reforms

The nature of the reforms has to do with its content or with Nascimento used to call its substantive component, the proposed objective with the transforming action. In this respect, variety is infinite, since the reform object can be centered, among many other possible options, in normative, structural or cultural variables, in the quantity, quality or relocation of its human resources or materials, in the expansion, contract or reorientation of the public services or in actions tending to promote the state opening and the civic participation.

Therefore, different from the other criteria on the classification of the reforms, its nature does not admit a simple characterization. Perhaps some generic categories could be distinguishable, as the ones proposed by Tomassini (2003) when talking about management, institutional or democratic reforms, this is, the ones aimed to modify certain management technologies (e.g. budgetary, personnel, information management), to reorganize or modernize a state organism management or to open the public management to the participation and control of the citizens.

In any case, for each one of this project specialized areas we will try to provide classifications related to their respective nature.

Uniqueness of the reforms

With this category I simply pretend to notice the level of novelty or innovation entailing the initiation of a certain reform. The

taxation at source retention in which the incomes originate is an historic example of a transcendental change in tax collection. The “citizen’s folder” or the electronic interoperability are more recent innovations that, due to its originality, represent a transcendental change on the public management mechanisms.

It could be said that, before the experiences of the state reformatations in LAC (and also, around the world), the initiatives and proposals that show a greater degree of originality are those that have been emerging along with the TIC development and those others related with growing democratization of the public management through the civic participation in the triple role of co-generator of public policies, co-producer of goods and services and controller of the state activity. Although these last are still incipient, it can be perceived a growing prominence of the civil society which promotes creative initiatives as the open state philosophy spreads all over, without necessarily depending on the electronic development. This is the case of an initiative that emerged in Denmark, where an NGO representing senior citizens, participates in the whole cycle of public policies connected to that country senior citizens, together with the state.

Orientation of the reforms

I have classified the state reformatations into terms of their orientation towards in and out of the State (Oszlak, 1999), but this directionality hides what is really important from an ideological point of view, this is, if the reforms pretend to improve the state by

reducing or strengthening it. The so called first- and second-generation reforms, were oriented precisely to one or the other direction, being seeking, respectively, a smaller state and a better state.

From this perspective, it is possible to classify the transformation actions into terms of the classic administrative reforms, aimed at introducing changes in the organizational structures, personnel regime, administrative processes, human resources training or the management computerization; and the ones oriented to modify the game rules governing the relationships between the national states, the subnational administrations, the market and the social organizations, such as the privatization, decentralization or the reduction of the state personnel staffing through voluntary or anticipated retirements.

Clearly, both types of reform have a very different sense and political-ideological content. In fact, even when both orientations tend to be assessed by literature and institutions as the base for strategies and measures of reform, only the second ones -the traditional administrative reforms- are considered such to this project effects.

Rhythm of the reforms

Time is clearly a distinctive factor of the reforms, that tends to be closely related with the scope, as in Nacimientos’ “globalist-opportunistic” category. The shock treatment on one hand and the long-term, on the other, also recognize multiple intermediate situations where the change gradualness ad-

mits diverse rhythms. Big-bang type reforms tend to adopt in deep economic junctures, military coups, revolutionary processes or decisive changes in the nature of the ruling politic regime. The urgency for providing the society and the powers to be with immediate signs tends to be interpreted not only as great scope actions, but also signs of temporary impact quickly perceptible.

There in the places where the incrementalism (the mudding through science, according to Lindblom, 1959) the decision-making style characterizes, the gradual reforms have been more frequent, even though, as it has been in the United States, they have been shown in a rhetoric and symbolic wrap. In Latin-America, Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay have been characterized by a notorious continuity in the effort of reform and innovation, without spectacular or strident announces but with progress visible through actions that have responded to long and mid-term strategies.

Contentiousness of the reforms

There are reforms that, ex ante, it could be easily anticipated that will cause strong resistance, be it inside the state apparatus or in certain sectors of the society. They usually correspond to the ones Hirschman would characterize as antagonizing policies. Due to their conception and, above it all, because of their consequences, they tend to affect certain interests or alter established power situations. Are part of this kind the introduction of electronic management support that displace hand work that was used in

the manual registration of the processes, the adoption of public purchase systems through virtual means or the creation of control and management institutions for fighting corruption. In these cases, the sources of resistance may be inside the state apparatus itself, where displaced servers or others to whom the reforms take their several sources of corrupt practices away will stand against any changes, or in the entrepreneurial sector, where those changes affect the counterparts of those corrupted practices.

Sometimes, the degree of antagonization that the reforms may create is related to the particular sensibility of the policies area that are the responsibility of the government bodies, especially when the reforms have an institutional nature. It will be surely easier to produce changes in agencies that are relatively "isolated" from political struggle or from public agenda's sensible matters, such as a Ministry for Foreign Affairs or an agency for the development of atomic energy, than in an agency responsible for education or public safety.

Other reforms are born with an origin legitimacy and gather strong support from the business sector, the state administration, media or in the civil society as a whole. This is the case of policies regarding participative budget, the establishment of single windows to simplify procedures, or policies recognizing people's right to the public information, measures that although in some cases may create some resistance, they tend to gather a generalized consensus regarding its desirability.

Implementation of the reforms

In part, the more or less real possibilities of implementing a reform depend on many circumstances. The degree of the eventual antagonization is one of them, but not necessarily the most common one. Sometimes, the deficit of institutional abilities gets in the way of projects that have the support of the most of the stakeholders (e.g., resources needed for the implementation, legal issues, cultural traditions). In general, it is matter of degree issue, which is influenced by the bunch of the other classification criteria we are addressing here (implementation rhythm, change scope, imposition style, etcetera).

The feasibility of implementing a reform is not a mere technological matter, susceptible to the strict implementation of criteria of instrumental rationality. We know from long ago that making responsible of failures to, for example, the politic interference or the cultural conditionings, is a mere exculpatory excuse, since the political or cultural rationality are, or better said should be, natural components of any assessment on a reform perspective.

Sometimes, the instability of the political conditions in public management sensible areas, restricts change initiatives, interrupts ongoing reform programs and affects, eventually, their implementation. Others, the distance between the complexity or sophistication of the intended changes and the institutional ability available cannot be seen, not only to implement them, but specially to sustain its implementation over time. In other words, back office demands are not sufficiently taken into consideration.

Imposition style of the reform

By imposition style I refer myself to the degree of coercion or consensus accompanying the design and implementation of the reforms. During long periods of its history, LAC lived under military dictatorships and patrimonialist regimes in which democratic institutions had been obliterated or only had a formal existence. Many of those authoritarian governments, convinced themselves of their regenerating mission, frequently imposed institutional reforms strategies conceived in the loneliness of their all-embracing power, without considering the participation or consensus of any civil or political sector, let alone, the public management permanent servers.

Other reforms, that have the legitimacy originated in a wide consensus or, even, in an explicit agreement between the confronting political powers, tend to approve transformations of huge transcendence. In a galloping hyperinflation situation, President Menem managed to the Argentinian Congress to approve the state reformation law that would cause its almost total dismantling. And this year, Costa Rica State's three powers subscribed the Open State Agreement, with the participation of several civil organizations.

There are, at least, other two situation in which the imposition style of the reform varies, even if that not depends on the authoritarian or democratic nature of the government in turn. One of them is the "reformation from the top", entrusted to a close group, relatively homogeneous and generally isolated from its reforming action object, that is not, neither seeking the agreement of

those who should experience the changes, nor tries to legitimate them through their cooptation or support. The other situation is that in which, typically, countries are virtually forced to adopt certain measures (e.g. privatization, deregulation, decentralization) to obtain the approval of multilateral financial agencies who are eager to grant loans just if those “conditionalities” are met. In both cases we would be considering cases in which the style of the reform is based on imposition and not on consensus.

Continuity of the reforms

There are countries in which the state reforming and modernization efforts show certain continuity over time and a unidirectionality that usually is not generally modified even in situation where the government’s political-ideological orientation substantially changes. For these cases, it can be said that there is a “state policy” on that matter, founded on a long-term strategy that shows minimum variations over time and it is manifested in gradual but persistent changes. It is, typically, Chile’s case, perhaps the only country from that region in which this surprising continuity is present, expressed in the incremental character of the reforms and in their sustainability over time.

The most frequent thing, in contrast, is the discontinuity, the erratic and often contradictory character of the reforms, the fits and starts, in which the only visible strategy is the succession of “trial-and-error” experiences. However, there are public management specialized areas in which the possibility of incrementally maintaining the changes is higher as a consequence of its own base tech-

nology in which the reformation efforts are based on. This is the case of the electronic government, where the technological development “forces”, in a matter of speaking, the adoption of changes, so the public management does not remain totally out of pace with the accelerated transformations that are happening, on this field, all over the world. This is also the case for some progress that can be seen in the open state, which are in part explained by their adhesion to the OGP, the NGOs pressure and at no lesser extent, by its own legitimacy granted by the government’s self-proclamation of adhering the cause to the open state.

Conclusion

This paper has not a conventional conclusion, because more than concluding a topic, its goal was to open it by proposing a kind of meta-analysis of the state reformation or modernization processes and so contribute to create a field of conceptual reflection and discussion on institutional change processes that, in general, have been addressed in the specialized literature as isolated cases or experience, more than with a comparative purpose that, as in this paper, seeks to classify and typify its modalities starting from a set of relevant criteria.

It lies ahead, in order to keep advancing on this line of inquiry, to build a state reformation and modernization processes typology, that, wherever possible combine all, or a large portion of proposed classification criteria, so it can be possible to identify possible patterns and link them with other political or economic conjuncture relevant variables of the countries.

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