

## Public policies in contemporary contexts: national and international Tendencies\*

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Organizing an edited volume is an intellectual endeavor that, when well-executed, results in a rich collection of perspectives, interpretations and contributions about a given subject, offering the reader valuable material for broadening their knowledge. This is the case for 'Gestão e Políticas Públicas no Cenário Contemporâneo' (Management and Public Policies in a Contemporary Context), organized by Telma Menicucci and José Geraldo Gontijo. It brings together articles by specialists and researchers from different teaching and research institutions in Brazil and abroad with experience in areas such as political science, public policy, public administration, sociology, and urban planning, among others. Throughout the 17 chapters, organized in five thematic sections, the authors introduce different frameworks, methodologies and perspectives, supplying the reader with a diversified overview of management and contemporary public policy.

The first part of the edited volume brings together four chapters that look at the theoretical and empirical dimensions of governance, emphasizing different aspects of state performance and their interaction with society in the contemporary production of public policies. Jon Pierre's chapter highlights what he considers to be one of today's biggest paradoxes: the reduction of state capacity at the exact moment when society is becoming more complex. The argument developed by Pierre is that political leadership

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consists of an essential element for re-articulating the role of the government and re-establishing state capacity.

Next, Volker Schneider investigates another aspect of governance: the distribution of power in public policy networks. Analyzing environmental policy networks in Germany, he examines the 'post-democracy' thesis, according to which advanced democracies should be in decline. His study reveals changes in the power structure of environmental policy networks, but in the opposite direction to that which would be expected by a 'post-democratic' perspective. This points to a more equitable distribution of power in more recent years.

The conceptual debate about governance is next used by Eduardo Marques as the base for his study about urban public policies in Brazil. He introduces the debate about governance in Latin America and problematizes some associations that are commonly found in the literature. Investigating the case of São Paulo, he identifies distinct patterns of governance that vary depending on the actors participating, the structure of the decision-making process, and the degree of insulation of the state, among other elements. This contributes to the operationalization of the concept of governance in city-oriented public policy.

The theoretical discussion about governance is taken up again by Roberto Pires and Alexandre Gomide, who examine the dimension of state capacity by looking at institutional arrangements for the implementation of public policies. Such a theoretical reflection sustains the empirical analysis about the recent experience of the Brazilian government. Pires and Gomide identify similarities between these programs, such as the formation of a complex network of actors during the implementation process, with an emphasis on the participation of state-owned enterprises and public banks and their interactions with the private sector. They also verify distinct aspects related to the participation of federal entities in the arrangements, openness to social participation, and intra-governmental centralization. Such findings help characterize the model of governance present in the federal government's arrangements of implementation, and contributes to studies about governance and state capacity in Brazil.

In the second part of the volume, the reflection is focused on the challenges of management and public policy with an eye on the processes of federalism and decentralization. Celina Souza's chapter starts the debate, exploring the theoretical aspects of the relation between federalism and public policies. Starting from the

statement that this relationship has not been researched much by the international literature, Souza looks for studies that establish a dialogue between the two subjects, looking at the federalism literature as well as studies that have been developed in the field of public policy. In this theoretical review, Souza pays special attention to concepts and frameworks that she considers promising for research on the topic. She introduces some considerations about the specificities of federalism, guiding future research on the topic.

The federative conflicts in Brazil are analyzed by Marco Costa, moving the analysis to the question of metropolises. Costa ends up indicating the existence of a crisis in metropolitan management in Brazil, which is characterized by a low degree of institutionalization and by ineffective management; this, for him, amounts to one of the biggest challenges for Brazil.

Finishing off the second part of the book, Ricardo Carneiro discusses recent processes of change in public management both around the world and in Brazil, with a special emphasis on processes of decentralization and diffusion. For Carneiro, the decentralization that has occurred in Brazil transformed local governments into privileged spaces for the execution of social policy, and has deepened participative mechanisms. This diffusion involves the definition of new organizational arrangements for the execution of public services. These changes demand professionalized bureaucracies and specific knowledge, a challenge that still must be confronted by public administration in Brazil.

The third part of the volume is made up of four chapters that examine, using different perspectives, mechanisms of social protection in Latin America. Célia Kerstenetzky offers an overview of the principal changes in global societies and economies. She introduces a debate surrounding a new paradigm of the state and well-being: the PIS (perspective of social investment). Kerstenetzky looks at the viability of this model for Latin America, concluding that, through the expansion of social services, it is adequate for dealing with problems that have been historically present in the region by promoting improvement in the labor market, reducing inequality and poverty, and stimulating development.

Next, in a more general study about social protection in Latin America, Ana Sojo brings the reader to an analysis of two specific fields: health and welfare. An interesting contribution of this article is its discussion about different ideas about social protection

that are circulating in Latin America. Sojo proposes an analysis that takes as a jumping-off point the debates about the coverage and financing of social protection, combining two distinct perspectives: that of mandatory contributions to the state and that of fiscal resources in general. By doing this, it introduces the reader to a key element for the interpretation of proposals of organisms such as the World Bank, Interamerican Development Bank (IDB), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL). It is also worth thinking about the role of these actors in the process of formulating public policies, as well as the way in which these ideas materialize in public policy proposals.

The preoccupation with another dimension of the social protection policy production process—namely, implementation—guides Renata Bichir's chapter. It focuses on two income transfer programs, analyzing comparatively the Brazilian 'Bolsa Família' program (PBF) and the Argentine 'Asignación Universal por Hijo' program (AUH). Bichir looks at two fundamental dimensions of the implementation process of these programs: the states' abilities to formulate and implement their policies (that is, state capacities), and the interaction of income transfer programs with other social policies (which brings problems with inter-sectoral coordination to the center of the debate). In general, in terms of capacities, Bichir gives special attention to the relative advances in the delivery of benefits and in monitoring and evaluation practices. She identifies, however, the biggest difficulties with the program's implementation as lying in inter-sectoral interaction for both countries.

The connections between public policy and inequality are the focus of Marcelo Medeiros and Pedro Souza's study, which analyzes income inequality with an investigation into direct cash flows between people and the state (for instance, taxes, social benefits, welfare, and public servant salaries), and the inequality of per-capita family income in the Brazilian population. Medeiros and Souza demonstrate the regressive character of the cash flows directed to the people and the inequality of incomes, and conclude that the Brazilian state contributes directly to income inequality, reproducing and deepening social disparities.

The fourth part of the book looks at urban policy, with a special emphasis on difficulties and advances in planning at the local and regional levels. Heloisa Costa presents a historical overview of the urban policies developed in Brazil, with an emphasis on the most recent period. With this history as a backdrop, Costa discusses the

social function of property, pointing to the difficulties in implantation when it comes to the matter of public policy. She also discusses the democratic management of the city, highlighting the advances in participation that have resulted in large part from changes in the institutional design of public policies. These advances have come to depend on participative practices such as councils and participatory budgeting practices.

The chapter written by Léo Heller et al. analyzes the difficulties that Brazil has encountered in the area of sanitation, emphasizing their historical roots. In relation to the most recent period, Heller et al. debate the changes that have been made in sanitation policy starting with Lula's administration, a moment that signaled relevant political and institutional changes, as Costa also points out in the previous chapter. Heller et al. think, however, that such changes coexisted with the structure that was inherited from the past, imprinting distinct, and at times contradictory, logics on the federal government's policy management.

Finally, the chapters that make up the fifth part of the book deepen its reflection on the recent transformations of the state and public administration, and their impacts on the production of policies. These chapters point out tendencies in the public management model and control mechanisms. Nuria Grau critically analyzes the result of the reforms developed in the last decades in various countries, highlighting some consequences: the adoption of the logic of productive efficiency; the reduction in importance of the idea of social solidarity; an emphasis on a technocratic vision of evaluation; and the 'technification' of relations between the state and society, among others. The reformist logic characterizes, in Grau's words, the 'instituted game', which should be substituted by an 'alternative game' based upon new theoretical foundations about the state, public administration, and the behavior of bureaucrats, while at the same time recovering the logic of citizenship.

The debate about institutional change guides Flávio Rezende's chapter, which investigates the theoretical and practical challenges that present themselves to students of the topic. He applies this reflection to the case of Brazilian public management reform. From a theoretical point of view, Rezende recovers elements of the contemporary neo-institutionalist debate, pointing out a series of challenges for understanding the processes of change in some fields, as well as more promising theorizations. He also highlights some difficulties stemming from the lack of a connection between political science and public management studies in Brazil. From the point of view of the empirical

world, the subject of change is poorly developed, whether because of a demand for immediate applications from any knowledge produced, or because of a culture of resistance to research and its results. Dealing with these challenges—both theoretical and practical—is something that will occupy future generations of academics and researchers who are interested in understanding the processes of public planning reform, concludes Rezende.

The two last chapters debate the question of the control of public administration. The chapter of Maria Rita Loureiro et al. analyzes the performance of the CGU (the national General Comptroller office), a federal public administration organ created in 2003 to centralize the federal administration's internal control system. Loureiro et al. argue that the CGU plays a role that is much broader than just internal control, and involves other functions such as the monitoring of public policies, the promotion of transparency, and social control. Regarding this last aspect, the chapter analyzes some of the CGU's initiatives for the organization of civil society and for technical training for the purpose of social control. These are experiences that represent, for the authors, an unprecedented practice for a bureaucratic control organ. This perspective gives rise to an opportunity for a new research agenda in the field of public administration.

Mário Spinelli's article discusses the role of internal control organs, initially restricted to a vision that was strictly formal and related to accounting but that, during the 1990s, passed through a moment of redefinition, incorporating activities that were more geared toward the supervision of the execution of government programs. With the creation of the CGU in 2003, internal control transcended its prior limits, as was pointed out in the previous chapter. Spinelli argues that this new model inaugurated by the CGU puts actions in practice that are necessary for Brazil to build its 'national system of integrity', a format that is more adequate for confronting complex problems like corruption.

The organization of the content into sections guarantees that the different frameworks presented by the authors fit together, giving cohesion to the project as a whole. During the reading, preoccupations with the question of governance and state capacity, the performance of the state in social protection and inequality reduction, and urban issues and the relevance of planning mechanisms, become themes that are shared by the authors of the different parts that make up the book. With the participation of national and international specialists, the chapters speak to recent literature, adequately

balancing theoretical reflection and empirical analysis, and adding elements to the debate clearly and consistently. It discusses an important complement for other materials that are aimed toward studies about the production of public policies in Brazil, adding to other successful edited volumes that have already been published, such as 'Políticas Públicas no Brasil' (Public Policies in Brazil, 2007), 'Federalismo e Políticas Públicas no Brasil' (Federalism and Public Policies in Brazil, 2013), and 'A Política Pública como Campo Multidisciplinar' (Public Policy as a Multidisciplinary Field, 2013).

It should also be noted that this edited volume represents an important moment of sedimentation for public policy studies in Brazil by incorporating the debate about public administration, which is fundamental for understanding the state and its activities. The publication of the edited volume 'Gestão e Políticas Públicas no Cenário Contemporâneo' is an important initiative and should lead to new questions for researchers and professionals interested in bringing their knowledge about public policy up-to-date, as well as broaden the horizons and possibilities of research in the field.

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