Public Policies – Embodiments of Democratization Processes

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Abstract. Public policies are the most practical part of the triad polity-politics-policy. Public policies are related to the practical areas of planning, implementation and evaluation of the governmental activities. From this perspective, to talk about a perfect public policy (or which aspires to perfection) means to speak about an efficient institutional system of a state as a sign of its degree of democratization. This article aims to explore "the cuisine" of democratic systems taking into account the applied perspective of public policy functionality, a type of functionality which is determined by a particular decision, by a kind of rationality or motivation of the actors involved or by a type of an organizational culture. Thus, the study of democracies involves an analytical approach developed at a micro level (the types of parties, institutional designs, election systems), public policies becoming indices of democratization for every state system.

Keywords: public policy process, rational decision making, motivation, organizational culture.

1. Introduction

Public policies are essential vectors of the modern democratic states or of the modern institutional constructions. In a "consolidated democracy"(Diamond, Yun-han Chu 2004) it is normal and essential that the governmental activity should be carried out by means of public policies and that public discussions about these policies should take place.

Public policies involve some rational aspects. In a democratic state, public policies can be seen as a rational approach of the legitimate actors who are trying to identify the problems on the agenda and to solve them taking into account the signals coming from the public sphere. Public policies are rational actions, highly motivated, goal-oriented, with purely practical purposes. Using public policies as democratic practices means to confirm the plural dimensions of contemporary societies, the diversity of actors involved, the divergent interests of different actions, and the complexity of decision making. Using public policies as democratic practices confirms a certain type of implementation strongly interconnected with different motivations and with personal, individual or group reasons which are more or less visible.

In order to have a complete picture of the universe of public policies, the practice of public policies should be made in relation to a series of exogenous incidental factors, such as policy competition, cultural patterns, organizational systems, organizational culture, and characteristics of individual actors.

Public policies cannot be analyzed and understood from the one-dimensional traditional perspective but from an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective (Nicolescu 1999), thus proving an interwoven social, political, economic, and cultural approach. Public policies include besides the holistic dimension (specific more to the theoretical analysis of public policies), a dimension of the particular, of the "interaction" (Rader 1997:11) or an inter-relationship of individuals, organizations, beyond the limits of any managerial theory.

Thus, the focus on these particular aspects of the phenomenon provides a particular vision, a vision that may raise very interesting and attractive questions and a multidimensional understanding of the practical actions seen as outputs of the system of the public policies process, a process that, if it was successful implemented, becomes an important sign in the democratic system.

2. A classic model of decision making. The rational action model

The decision making process refers to the situation in which once a problem has been brought on the agenda and discussed, the solutions are proposed and finally one is chosen. One should not forget that public policies field and public space are areas of the intersection of multiple fields. Decision making is an act with multiple connotations and dimensions, with outcomes that may unexpectedly alter the group of individuals which the policy addresses to. Decision making involves a certain degree of accountability of those involved in order to reach a final good decision.

The following questions whose answers become indicators of a systemic process that supports the democratic level could be raised: What is a good decision? What are the criteria by which a decision can be regarded as acceptable or not? What role does rationality play in the decision making process? Does the decision making process involve the rationality of actors?

The decision making process is no longer seen as an institutional or institutionalized step, but as a complex process of interaction and negotiation and may be influenced by several causal factors which are intrinsic or extrinsic to the process. This requires, on the one hand, a more personalized approach to public policies (in line with the

sociological theories developed within the French areas of studies) and, on the other hand, a multidimensional approach (to the economic criteria that are often identified with a specific type of rationality, but not only, especially since the economic theory is insufficient).

In general, a good decision involves the application of proposed solutions to criteria such as: costs, benefits, number of people involved and affected, proposed alternatives, costs in the short term, short, medium and long-term benefits and beneficiaries, time required to implement the respective policy-proposal, etc.

Theoretically speaking, it is often considered that a decision-maker takes into account all these elements before deciding. The theoretical and empirical studies on policies provide a rational model of decision making and thus, the decision having a rational nature.

The rational actor model is based on the idea that a decision-maker has set from the beginning the objectives and the goals that (s)he has to achieve with different means that (s)he is able to select.

In this model, the distinction between means and ends is essential for understanding the behavior of a particular decision-maker. Decision making purposes are assumed to be given and are chosen by someone before he engages in the process of decision (…). The task is to choose from all the means at its disposal, to meet the most efficient goals. If a person chooses those means, then (s)he has a rational behavior. (Miroiu 2001:113, our transl.)

According to this model, the person who takes the decisions must have certain data means, the data on the goals. (S)he must take into account the alternatives proposed by other actors, alternatives that (s)he can analyze and evaluate on the basis of a comparison with other similar situations and decisions.

In order to consider a decision rational, decision makers should identify some common points on that policy, they should "identify and define consistent" (Miroiu 2001: 115) all the objectives and goals and all possible alternatives, they should provide all the consequences that would result from choosing between the possible alternatives and compare them in each case and, finally, they should be able to choose the solution that would provide a maximization of goals.

Rational decisions should not be reduced to the analysis and use of economic criteria (even if cost-benefit analysis often relies on the level of this model). Rationalism involves taking into account all social, political and economic values involved in the implementation of public policies.

The selection of a rational policy requires a substantial amount of information on the company values and their hierarchy, the various alternatives of public policies, the consequences of each public policy, the relation between benefits and cost for each alternative. (Popescu 2006: 246, our transl.)

Cold rationalism is supported by Max Weber ([1904] 2007). According to Weber's theory, the effectiveness of decisions is based on differentiating and distancing from traditional bureaucratic forms that retain ownership of the administration means.

A public officer's loyalty in a modern bureaucracy refers to his attachment to rules and regulations and it is different from the relation between the loyalty of a vassal and that of a senior, as it is the case of a patrimonial public officer. (Poede 2002:18, our transl.)

The Weberian bureaucrat fully complies with the laws, (s)he is subject to a strict hierarchy, acting in a disciplined way, having an impersonal behavior, and taking decisions according to some institutional laws. Relations with the institutions are impersonal, formal and formalized. Efficiency transpires from rational labor discipline that takes place within a legal framework.

A clear example of this relation is the general requirement that government must treat similar cases in the same way, operate in an impersonal manner and be strictly governed by rules (...). That is why the Weberian model of bureaucracy, with its emphasis on rationality principle of law, is quite the appropriate one to the public sphere (Beetham [1987] 1998: 6, our transl.).

In any state, there is a legal basis that regulates this area, but in practice, things are different. Nowadays in a world of postmodernity which tends to question the laws or tends to avoid them, we can no longer talk about civil Weberian bureaucrats.

The barriers tend to be more flexible, we can speak about "a new public management" (Alexander 2000: 242), about resizing the public space, about possible public-private or semi/private partnerships, about street level bureaucracy (Alexander 2000: 243), much closer to the customer, even if, in this case, according to some authors (Sabatier 1999, Profiroiu 2006), this leads to a loss or a diminution of legitimacy.

The issue of rationality is far from being solved especially since a decision-maker's role has been increasing to the level of the process itself, especially that at the collective level, different coordinates may appear and that one can speak of a multitude of meanings of the concept "rationality".

3. Actors' subjective perspectives on the decision making process. A shift from rationality to motivation

The decision making process is influenced by motivation. The studies on the role of motivation in the decision making process appeared in the '60s with the emergence of the behavioral paradigm (Allport 1937, 1950, 1957; Skinner 1938). It is important to highlight the relation between motivation and the way in which the decision is taken, how motivation influences the decision-makers' behaviors, whether a certain type of motivation can lead to a certain type of decision and action, whether motivation is in a direct or inverse proportion with the degree of efficiency identified within a particular public institution.

Psychologically speaking, motivation is defined as "a trend that prefigures the movement and the action. We might even say that the trend is the beginning of the movement towards the action" (Cosmovici 1996: 140, our transl.). Motivation is based on reason or interest, which determines a person's reaction. "The reason is the psychological phenomenon that plays an essential role in the initiation, guidance and modification of one's behavior" (Cosmovici 1996: 142, our transl.). The motivation can be seen now as "an individual predisposition to respond with specific reasons that support that action in a unique way" (Kim 2005: 248, our transl.) and it refers to how "behavior starts, how it is energized, sustained, directed, and stopped. At the same time, it also refers to the type of the final subjective reaction" (Wright 2001: 560, our transl.). When talking about motivation in the decision-making process, we have to understand those reasons that can influence the decision making process in some particular contexts. Bradley E. Wright (2001: 566) provides a threefold motivation: rational, rule-based, and emotional. The reasons beyond a *rational motivation* involve certain calculations that a decision maker should perform in order to maximize its utility. Whereas *motivation based on rules* refers to the promotion of activities aiming to achieve the common good and the public interest, *emotional motivation* is related to the public service and to the public space. Unlike rational motivation which emphasizes the activation of some personal reasons, rule-based motivation refers to duty, social equity and to the loyalty to the government and emotional motivation is based on internalized beliefs regarding the importance of voluntary action.

Motivation is strongly determined by the preferences identified at the individual level. The presence of a human being in an organization can be directly quantified to the degree of performances within the respective organization. That is why organizations are often interested in attracting persons with a high degree of motivation. It can be said that the common motivation in an organization can lead to collective behavior, including a

greater degree of trust, reciprocity, leading to the identification of the individual with the organization.

But the analysis of motivation in the decision making process is not so simple. The complexity of the process is caused by the social actors' reasons which are difficult to be pinpointed since they are seldom reported. Thus we may distinguish (Roşca 1975:376) between the extrinsic motivation which is identified in the public space and the intrinsic motivation in private space. This distinction is difficult to be proved since it is not easy to determine what motivates an actor in making a decision or in adopting a certain behavior. However it can be said that certain features of the public space in which the actors operate may influence their motivation, that the public space may influence the motivation. And yet some "employee's reasons" (Wright 2001:568) can be identified. These reasons vary from person to person depending on different individual needs, their values and personal preferences which have a direct or indirect impact on their job security and on their satisfaction at work. In other words, highly motivated decision makers who value certain principles have not, necessarily, a strong work motivation and their behavior in the private space does not necessarily translate the intrinsic motivation, but this kind of motivation may be strongly correlated with the space in which they make their activities if we speak about their job security.

Milan Larson and Fred Luthans (2006:250) associate the theory of motivation with the purposes theory. The motivation of decision makers is related to his/ her purposes. We distinguish between the degree of satisfaction of the goals to be achieved and the degree of obligation of the purposes. Satisfaction refers to a number of features of the goals that should be achieved, namely their difficulty, their specificity, the conflict between them and how they can influence the degree of motivation of decision-makers. The degree of obligation of the purposes has two aspects: the importance of purpose and its own degree of effectiveness. The degree of effectiveness is based on the decision maker's reasoning about his/ her capabilities to organize, execute certain required actions or to implement them. The obstacles that may appear during the decision making process are directly related to the importance of the goal.

In this context, the degree of effectiveness involves the increased interest of decision-makers. This is linked with the decision makers' "hope" (as a constructive element), "optimism" (as the opening towards performance and action), and "activism" (as the individual's capacity to go beyond the limits or borders through concrete actions) (Larson, Luthans 2006: 251).

All these elements can influence the decision maker's degree of motivation, although these variables are beyond the contextual factors that closely correlate with all these

calculations that the decision-maker has in mind when (s)he is engaged in the decision making process in the public space and in the implementation of his/ her decisions.

4. Beyond rationality and motivation. Conditions imposed on public decisions

In the field of public policies, decision is influenced by two variables (Miroiu 2001:128): the cold rationality of public policy-makers and the rational choice model. We can observe that during the process of agenda-setting, some other elements are important as well: the choice of a possible public policy, implementation, the motivations of the organizational actors or their values that they have internalized. Organizational culture, ideology, and civic culture are also some other factors that can be identified beyond the strictly personal characteristics of the actors involved.

Organizational culture can be defined as all the standards, norms, rules, traditions and values shared by organization members in their work process (Robbins 2003:142). Organizations have specific cultures since every individual has his/ her own personality. Organizational culture is reflected in concrete events, such as the dominant style of management, the employees' motivation, the labor relations, the requirements of a particular behavior or fashion look, the work discipline. The style, communication channels and strategies are interrelated with the organizational culture and the climate seen as the result of communication will be an important variable for this culture. Organizational culture predicts a long-term behavior of a respective organization. Organizational culture requires a certain type of culture: power, role, task, or person (Handy 1985, in Dâncu 2000:33). Power culture involves centralized control, decisions being taken as a result of power and influence. Communication takes place from top to bottom and it is prescriptive, direct, and assertive and the performance is judged through concrete results. It is characterized by the presence of highly specialized sectors, high level of standardization and formalization, by the existence of clear rules and procedures and the reward is proportional to the standards. The task of the organizational culture is oriented towards the performance of a particular project or goal. It involves bringing together human resources, material and financial resources, strong interactive communication, growing team values, a high degree of autonomy and pleasant working relationships, structuring and dynamic egalitarian strategy, cooperation. The culture of the person can be rarely met. The organization is focused around the individual and concepts, such as quality and performance. It is subordinated to the individual and it is defined by him. The styles of communication, persuasion and consultation are the only

accepted within this type of culture. Equality and acceptance strategies are often adopted. The communication climate is cooperative, at least in the early stages.

Nowadays we hear more and more about a new vision regarding the organizational culture. The new management favors public leadership and the process centered on human resources and exercised within human relations. The perfect commanders inspire others, contribute with their full intellectual and emotional support, skills, values, courage, and conviction to achieve organizational and personal changes. "Leadership is a process that aims to give a meaning to the collective effort that has to achieve a goal" (Lazăr 2004: 96, our transl.). This process brings along the social capital which is responsible for a new vision on the institutional relations and on the inter-institutional or intra-institutional cooperation based on trust.

We can speak of a "productive sociability" (Lazăr 2004: 97) as "a culture of openness, specific to the open social spaces" (Sandu 1999: 71, our transl.), promoting trust, association, and tolerance. From this perspective, the culture of power, the socio-professional human relations, the public leadership will take on new dimensions, which will combine the values of public policy with the policy makers' personal motivations.

Civic culture influences the actors involved in public policy making process from outside to inside, from the outer space in which public policies take place, from the public area of the environment. "Civic culture designates the beliefs, values, and feelings that are significant for a nation at a respective moment in time. It filters the people's perceptions and attitudes and it influences the general rules of participation" (Almond, Verba 1996: 208, our transl.). These beliefs, values, and feelings that are activated constitute the reasons for differentiating among organizations.

Every society is based on a "system of political objects" (Almond, Verba 1996: 209), consisting of three elements: the class of institutions (including legislative and governmental bodies), the class of decision-makers and the class of public policies (including judgments, decisions of the public space).

This system provides the brand for a civilization and it becomes the cultural sociotype of a nation. This implies that people always relate to the specific civic values of their time, making efforts comply with the cognitive, affective, and evaluative coordinates of the culture they live in. (Teodorescu 2003: 61, our transl.).

In other words, policy makers will be, beyond the individual or group motivation, and beyond their personal values, the prisoners of the temporal context in which they operate. This means, on the one hand, a certain kind of cultural fit, but on the other hand, a capacity of mobility. Taking into account this point of view, in a democratic system or

which tends to aspire to democracy, democratic values, such as freedom, equality, efficiency, effectiveness, rule of law, and market economy, will become values having the role of orientation towards the development of policies and thus towards a new type of leadership that is to be jointly shaped.

5. Conclusions

The public policy process involves a thorough analysis of the factors involved, of the external or internal factors and their fine correlation. The analysis of the public policy process in a system that tends towards a consolidated democracy requires a structural, behavioral and functional approach. This approach should focus on the lines of the decision-makers, their motivations and rationality, on their values, on the leadership and the organizational culture promoted.

All these elements form the micro level, namely "the deep roots" of these processes. The analysis of these elements can provide some insights into how the democratic process must operate inside the state. The analysis also focuses on the differences that arise within different communities and on the difficulty of finding, in this context, a unique operating prescription of democracy. One should take into account that the analysis of democratization processes involves "the digging" into much smaller and more practical slices of reality which are characterized by a much higher degree of contingency, namely the practice of public policies.

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